

THE CHALLENGES OF THE PRESIDING BISHOP
OF THE NORTHEAST REGION
CHURCH OF GOD OF PROPHECY

A THESIS-PROJECT
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF
GORDON-CONWELL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY
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MAY 2019

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To my darling wife Chris, my greatest motivation and best helper. To my children Jessica and James, who remain treasured and invaluable gifts.

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PREFACE

The presiding bishop is responsible for the oversight of the work under his purview, not only in matters spiritual but in all matters relevant to the continued operations and progress of the churches under his care. What started out as a predominantly spiritual role has gradually transitioned over time to an increasingly more complex one, so much so that administrative concerns now outweigh the spiritual focus where many of these offices are concerned.

The Northeast Region is no exception to this problem. It covers a vast territory with a multiplicity of complications and challenges – presently comprising sixty churches, spread out over seven states and the Caribbean island of Bermuda. Administrative concerns and matters perpetually abound, often obscuring the spiritual and preoccupying much of the bishop's time and energy.

This study helps clarify and identify what the true role and function of the presiding bishop should be. It addresses the need of maintaining pastoral effectiveness in positions of power. It speaks to the fact that the role indeed involves a very strong administrative component but strongly underscores the fact that the presiding bishop is first and foremost a shepherd of the flock, as mandated in Scripture.

Though faced with stringent demands of ensuring that administrative matters are given diligent attention, the faithful presiding bishop refuses to be turned into an administrator. Like the first apostolic bishops of Acts 6, when tempted to become more preoccupied with the ministry of tables, the presiding bishop of today chooses to do likewise. He refuses to succumb to such a temptation. He finds a way to remain faithful to his original, divine, sacred calling – that of ministering and catering to the spiritual

needs of the house. He expands leadership by engaging in apostolic delegation so that administrative needs are satisfied.

As a Father-in-God, he remains committed to the ministry of the Word of God and prayer. I remain solidly convinced that the role of the presiding bishop is characterized not by trappings of power and prestige, but that of *diakonia*, faithful service to the body of Christ. The pastoral gift is more important than administrative capabilities where this office is concerned.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This Thesis-project would not have been accomplished without the inspiration received from the Chief Shepherd and His gentle nudging and guidance over these many years. From my first experience of salvation over fifty years ago to this present time, He has so graciously led, and it has been my greatest joy to follow Him. From my very first pastorate of 14 members, 43 years ago to presently serving the saints in the Northeast region of the Church of God of Prophecy – His amazing hand and presence have overshadowed, protected, led and inspired. For this I give total praise to Him. “Every day, I will praise you and extol your name for ever and ever. Great is the Lord . . .” (Psalm 145:2,3)¹.

This work would not have been accomplished without the amazing encouragement and inspiration that I received from my mentor, Dr. Hector Ortiz. How I appreciated his wisdom and words of helpful erudition all along the way. Truly his commitment to raising the educational level in the Church of God of Prophecy is commendable and noteworthy. I consider myself honored to be one of his students. I am also so grateful for the tutelage received from Dr. Eldin Villafaña. Glen and Katherine Osborn were tremendous as they edited each chapter and offered suggestions. Special thanks to all who took time to participate in the questionnaire survey, from which pertinent information was gleaned.

I certainly also owe a great debt of gratitude to Dr. Morais Cassell who was my ‘go-to’ person and who encouraged me all the way. Dr. Wantworth Heron was more than a blessing as he shared so positively with me on this journey and provoked me to good

1. All Scripture quotations are from the NIV, unless otherwise stated.

works. My cousin, Michael Greenaway, who shared this journey with me was most helpful and encouraging. Dr. Junior Headlam was always eager and ready to help.

However, I must be totally honest by confessing that none of this would have been accomplished without the loving help and constant support and encouragement I received consistently from my life's partner, Christina Verona Kelly, my wife of thirty-one loving years. She not only typed and retyped, but she eagerly listened, critiqued, offered suggestions and kept pushing me to work according to schedule that the project would be completed in a timely manner. For all her love, help and daily support, I say thank you with all my heart and love.

I remain humbled by the thought of being allowed to serve amongst such great pastors and parishioners here in the Northeast region. I give the Almighty total praise!

ABSTRACT

The challenges of the presiding bishop from New Testament times to the present have always been complex and demanding. It has become increasingly difficult to strike a balance between the administrative functions of the office and that of the spiritual/pastoral. Instead of being loving shepherds of the flock and Fathers-in-God, many presiding bishops have become good administrators. This dissertation argues that the presiding bishop though required to do administration, is first and foremost a shepherd of the flock according to the Scriptures and original divine intent.

The project not only identifies and confronts the challenges of the presiding bishop in the Northeast region it also endeavors to work towards a paradigm for the bishop to be a more effective shepherd of the flock. The church today needs apostolic bishops with pastoral hearts more than just administrative bishops.

CHAPTER 1

THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

Introduction

The role of the presiding bishop has evolved over the years taking in a wide gamut of operations. It ranges from the very spiritual to the very secular. It seems not as straight forward today as is outlined in Scriptures, where the spiritual seems to have been separated and truncated from the administrative. This was done by a clear choice of the early apostolic leadership of the church. They remained intentional about being the spiritual fathers and guides to the early movement. They clearly stated and were convinced about their divinely appointed roles and how they were called upon to function as emissaries of Christ, called and commissioned to lead the flock in all matters spiritual. Everything else, though important, was secondary.

Today, however, in the traffic of the everyday operations of the Church of God of Prophecy, there seems to have been a radical adjustment to the execution of this role and office, with the administrative functions and duties comingling with and, at times, exceeding that of the spiritual, contrary to the paradigm established in Acts 6. The Northeast Region is no exception to the development of this practice over the years. More and more, if not careful the presiding bishop runs the risk of being much more an Administrative Officer than pastor of the flock, which according to scripture is the supreme task of this office. Faced with the incessant, convoluted demands of administration, the presiding bishop can find himself trapped behind an administrative desk as he sits on the episcopal chair consumed with administrative matters while, in the

meantime, losing sight of his true calling—that of apostolic praying and the ministry of the Word.

Though called as supervisor or overseer of the work under his care, the presiding bishop must ensure that God's will for his life and calling is not circumvented by the church's will. Appointed to supervise, the presiding bishop of the Northeast Region cannot forget he was preeminently called to pastor the sheep. The effort should constantly be made not to be inundated by the administrative demands or to be overcome by ecclesiastical bureaucracy. He must find a way to resist the culture that has developed in the Church of God of Prophecy concerning this office and, by so doing, bring about a much-needed change.

Purpose of Thesis-Project

This project seeks to address the need of the presiding bishop being an effective pastor of the flock while, at the same time, serving in the demanding capacity of "overseer" to the churches under his care. The real challenge is to answer the question, How does the presiding bishop not lose sight of his true calling to pastor and shepherd as he sits on the episcopal chair, enmeshed in a world of bureaucracy and administrative responsibilities?

Scripture remains very clear and definitive about the role and office of the bishop as given in Acts 6:1-7, 1 Peter 5:1-4, and John 21:15-19; however, executing the role and office of the bishop according to Scripture seems to be problematic. How does the presiding bishop maneuver all the administrative exigencies attached to this office and

remain true to his biblical calling? Secular thinking sees the bishop's role as preeminently administrative; Scripture affirms a thoroughly different viewpoint.

This project brings this tension into sharp relief and seeks to answer this question: How does the presiding bishop ensure that God's will is not being circumvented by *ekklesia*'s will? Gardiner Calvin Taylor, in his discourse on preaching, helps to frame the question when he eloquently states, "The question arises and remains whether the church is going to be baptized by the secular society or whether secular society is going to be baptized by the church."¹ He claims that "this is the problem of our whole enterprise."²

The intention of this project is to identify and confront this challenge, endeavoring to work toward a paradigm for the presiding bishop to be a more effective shepherd of the flock. It is hoped that this project will spark further scholarly work in this area, helping to redirect the thinking of the Church of God of Prophecy where this office is concerned, placing the emphasis once more on the spiritual nature and role of this office. Thus, this project seeks to draw attention to and encourage conversation in the following areas:

- The culture and mindset of the Church of God of Prophecy can be challenged and encouraged to change where the office of presiding bishop is concerned.
- More profound theological formation and training will be given to presiding bishops.
- Presiding bishops will become more intentional about refusing to become mere administrators.

1. Cleophus James LaRue, *Power in the Pulpit: How America's Most Effective Black Preachers Prepare Their Sermons* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 147.

2. LaRue, *Power in the Pulpit*, 147.

- Presiding bishops will see the need to place the greater emphasis on spiritual matters over the administrative duties.
- Presiding bishops will develop the art of apostolic delegation.
- Presiding bishops serving as pastors in order to keep the shepherding connection.
- Presiding bishops will seek to become more evangelistic.
- Presiding bishops will feel compelled to commit to unceasing apostolic praying.
- Presiding bishops will become more committed to the ministry of the Word.
- Presiding bishops will seek to “unbusy” their schedules.

As the researcher focuses on the problem, the Church of God of Prophecy covers a wide field, existing in 135 nations of the world and almost every state of the US, which indeed would be too large a scope to explore and cost-prohibitive to execute. Therefore, the researcher has chosen the Northeast Region, where he presently serves and resides, which may provide a reasonable representation of what is reflected across the Church of God of Prophecy for those serving in this capacity.

Thesis

The role of the Presiding Bishop is primarily spiritual as clearly defined in Scripture. However, secular thinking and views seem to have coopted and commandeered it into something that is diametrically opposed to its original divine intent and purpose. Refusing to accept this notion of the secularization of the bishopric, Harry Blamires in his insightful book, *The Christian Mind*, makes this point more than abundantly clear when he states, “Nothing therefore could stand in more powerful contrast to the true Christian

concept of the administrator.”³ He succinctly calls into question the idea of the bishop’s role being that of Administrative Officer. He sees this as dangerous and unhealthy for the church, and he makes this crystal clear by pointing out, “The Bishop’s office is crucial, and if we allow our thinking about this office to be contained within a secular frame of reference, we shall do grave practical damage to the Church.”⁴ This truth still has to be hammered home to the Church of God of Prophecy who, for the most part, still sees this role as both spiritual and administrative, as reflected in the *Ministry Policy Manual of the Church of God of Prophecy, 2016*.⁵

The researcher contends that should the presiding bishop lose sight of what he is preeminently called to do, he can certainly make shipwreck of his calling and hurt not only himself but many others whom he was sent to serve and help. The presiding bishop of the Church of God of Prophecy should take the principled stance of embracing, implementing, and actualizing apostolic leadership and oversight. He must persistently resist the temptation of being overtaken and inundated by the secular and administrative functions of the office, no matter how forceful and overpowering they become. His task remains sacred and divine, sent to shepherd the sheep.

The Church of God of Prophecy should pay heed to Harry Blamires’ erudite commentary and observation on this matter. It should emphasize the biblical stance that the office of the bishop is spiritual and should not be secularized by worldly expectations, thinking, or demands. The bishop is first and foremost a shepherd/pastor of the flock. His

3. Harry Blamires, *The Christian Mind: How Should a Christian Think?* (Vancouver, BC: Regent College Pub., 2005), 58.

4. Blamires, *Christian Mind*, 57.

5. DeWayne Hamby, ed., *Ministry Policy Manual* (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing House, 2016), 30-31.

first responsibility is to the Chief Shepherd who called him. He should be a living example of the flock (1 Peter 5:3). Pope John Paul II, speaking on the role of the bishop, states, “He must be first in faith, first in love, first in fidelity, first in service.”⁶ Consequently, the role of the presiding bishop is preeminently spiritual.

A Brief Overview

The Church of God of Prophecy is an international organization with an overall membership of close to one million, presently functioning in 135 nations of the world and in almost every state of the United States. Its aim and intent have always been to be a global movement as it seeks to fulfil its part as a movement of followers of the Lord of the Harvest, who irrevocably challenged His disciples to go into all the world and make disciples of all humankind. As the church continues to grow and expand, so does the role and function of its leaders.

Instead of being loving shepherds of the flock and devout spiritual fathers, exemplifying the Christ of Scriptures, the role of the presiding bishop is subtly being transitioned into that of an administrative officer. In many cases, the presiding bishop serves as an administrator, counselor, coordinator of activities and functions, chairman of various committees, fundraiser-in-chief, diplomat, ombudsman, peacemaker, problem solver, organizer, mediator, visionary, spokesman, pastor, preacher, teacher, accountant, moral theologian, marriage officer, church planter, evangelist, and defender of the faith. Overwhelmed with the monumental task of administration, many presiding bishops

6. John Paul, *John Paul II / Rise, Let Us Be on Our Way*, trans. Walter Ziemba (New York, NY: Warner Books, 2004), 45.

acknowledge that, if not careful, very little time is left for the performance of spiritual disciplines. Appointed to serve as spiritual director or supervisor of the churches under his care, the presiding bishop can become swamped by the stockpile of other matters which constantly compete for his urgent attention and which cannot be ignored without serious repercussions.

Covering quite a vast area geographically and having to presently supervise a parish of 58 churches and two missions in the states of New York, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, and the Island of Bermuda, the administrative demands and concerns of the Northeast Region can be almost never-ending, overpowering, and quite challenging. The care of the churches goes well beyond making an occasional visit and preaching an inspirational sermon to help lift the hearts and spirits of the people. In today's context of the Northeast, this care involves the administrative issues of oversight of the campgrounds and other facilities, along with their maintenance and upkeep. It means giving attention to the smaller churches and some of their administrative needs and complications. It involves giving rapt attention to legal matters in reference to church properties owned by the regional church, carefully observing building codes and city laws to avoid losing tax exempt status or being severely penalized by city authorities, in terms of fines and other penalties.

Administrative issues include matters of ensuring each local church is properly incorporated, deeded, insured, and indemnified. It sometimes incorporates securing bank loans and mortgages, ensuring loans obtained in the name of the church are repaid promptly.

The presiding bishop of the Northeast therefore can find himself caught in a serious dilemma. He is preeminently called upon to do spiritual work, yet there is so much administration that comes with the territory. He is required to do administration but then finds there is so little assistance, financial and otherwise, with which to accomplish the task. The crisis of limited finances has become a serious recurrent problem for the presiding bishop. Fiscal records of the Northeast Region indicate that a recent change in the overall financial system of the Church of God of Prophecy has resulted in a critical shortfall of funds accruing to the regional/national/state offices, thereby severely affecting the operations of these offices. Therefore, a common challenge for the regional/state offices is acquiring the financial means to adequately staff and support the office of the presiding bishop and ensure a more effective functioning of this office.

There have been instances when a new presiding bishop is appointed and there is no administrative staff left on hand to help facilitate or orientate the incoming bishop's transition into this new role, thus making his new assignment even more taxing administratively. He is left to sort and figure things out for himself as he works his way through files and a preponderance of other materials. Being unable to respond to many requests for financial assistance arising from the fields also serves to heighten the frustration faced by the presiding bishop of the Northeast Region and other bishops serving elsewhere, as they routinely seek to balance the seemingly impossible roles of bishop and administrative officer concurrently.

Therefore, if caution is not observed, the primacy and necessity of the shepherding role of the presiding bishop can easily become curtailed by the minutiae of bureaucracy and the multiplicity of functions he is expected to skillfully fulfill. He runs

the grave risk of falling into the administrative trap of which Harry Blamires in his book, *The Christian Mind*, strongly lashes out against, when he unequivocally states, “The bishop is a Father-in-God” and “not an Administrative Officer.”⁷ Any deflection away from the essence of the bishop’s true Christian calling can indeed be harmful to the church if not checked and addressed. He runs the risk of falling prey to the peril of careerism against which even Pope Francis so diligently warned those who rose through the church’s hierarchy to become bishops or higher. He bluntly declared, “Careerism is leprosy. Leprosy!”⁸ To these crucial words of caution, the presiding bishop of the Northeast Region will do well to pay heed. The bishop’s role and office are first spiritual and not to be secularized. It is more than a career. It is a calling.

An Inherited Problem

In the Church of God of Prophecy much of what is believed and practiced today stem from the teachings and example of A. J. Tomlinson, the much revered and inspired founder/leader and first presiding bishop of the movement which began in the foothills of the Appalachian mountains of North Carolina in 1903. Beginning with just a few charter members, this movement soon grew into thousands by the time of A. J. Tomlinson’s death in 1943. He was indeed, in the eyes of many, a leader ahead of his time--energetic, forward thinking, innovative, creative, Spirit-filled and Spirit-led. As he led, the organization grew and flourished. However, it was A. J. Tomlinson’s views that the general overseer’s office, which he held for forty years, was like that of James the brother

7. Blamires, *Christian Mind*, 58.

8. Chris Lowney, *Pope Francis: Why He Leads the Way He Leads* (Chicago, IL: Loyola Press, 2013), 56.

of Jesus, of whom it is believed became leader of the New Testament church in the early days of its operation in the book of Acts.

As he wrote concerning James, the brother of the Lord, and as he saw himself as one occupying the same position held by James in the New Testament, he made some very extravagant claims. He declared,

... but it is certainly an honor conferred upon this noble body of reformers to have the privilege of looking through God's great telescope that pierces back through nineteen centuries and get a view of that illustrious man of God, James, the Lord's brother, as he sat upon his imperial and mediatorial throne, like Moses of fifteen centuries before, and at the proper time rise to his feet with high reverence and godly dignity and hear him say, "Men and brethren, harken unto me..."⁹

He further states, "In our searching of the Scriptures we have found James; the Lord's brother occupying the executive chair under God, and the twelve apostles of the Lord in submission to him, and they recognized him as their superior in government affairs."¹⁰ The more one reads, the more illumination is received concerning the views and ideas that have developed around the understanding and operations of the presiding bishop in the Church of God of Prophecy which still impact the functioning of the office today. A. J. Tomlinson points out, "The order as recognized and adopted by the General Assembly, following the chief executive is, overseers of states, overseers of districts, pastors and helpers to care for the local churches."¹¹ He claims, "This corresponds to Moses' organization of the church in the wilderness. This organization has been pretty thoroughly tested and proved to be good."¹² It is undeniable that A. J. Tomlinson saw this

9. A J. Tomlinson, *Assembly Annual Address 1911-1927* (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Press, 1945), 45.

10. A. J. Tomlinson, *General Assembly Annual Addresses, 1911-1927*, vol. 2, Heritage Series (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing, 2011), 137.

11. Tomlinson, *General Assembly Annual Addresses, 1911-1927*, 137.

12. Tomlinson, *General Assembly Annual Addresses, 1911-1927*, 137.

role as quite sacred, but also as equally administrative and executive as time progressed and as the history and literature seem to substantiate.

A look at A. J. Tomlinson's schedule as the church began to grow and multiply is also very telling and enlightening. This may help the reader understand the sort of protracted view of ambivalence and perplexity that now surrounds the office of presiding bishop in the Church of God of Prophecy. The records dramatically reveal how cumbersome and involved the office was becoming and gives somewhat of a glimpse of the inherited problem. He states in the year 1921:

This past year has been the hardest year of my life in many aspects. Since the last Assembly I have filled the place of General Overseer of all the Churches, distributed the money to the ministers since January 1st, this year, editor and publisher of the Evangel, business manager of the publishing house, superintendent of the Bible Training School, both the Home School and by correspondence, preached a lot of funerals, performed a number of marriage ceremonies, started and superintended the orphanage and children's home, finance the debt on the auditorium, preached a number of times for the pastor when he was sick or gone, superintendent of the Sunday School which has grown up to 313 last Sunday. I have worked on average of 18 hours a day and then I feel that I am falling behind all the time.¹³

On another occasion he intimates:

I can hardly tell all I do. I have my regular office work, editing and publishing the paper, Sunday School literature, 150 to 180 letters every week to answer and attend to, pastoral work, making peace sometimes among the members, praying for the sick, preaching three or four times a week . . . I work from 16-18 hours every day and have to hurry in everything I do.¹⁴

His schedule was indeed frenetic, superhuman, and almost, if not impossible, to manage and yet it seemed to have become the norm for him as he feverishly attempted to balance the apostolic demands of the office with the never-ending demands of the administrative

13. A. J. Tomlinson, *Diary of A.J. Tomlinson, 1901-1924*, comp. Hector Ortiz and Adrian L. Varlack, vol. 5, Heritage Series (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing, 2012), 245.

14. Tomlinson, *Diary*, 245.

and the bureaucratic. It seemed manageable for a while, but as A. J. Tomlinson repeatedly confessed he felt unusually harried, pressed beyond measure and as falling behind all the time. He conceded at another time, “. . . the strain has been intense, often more than I can stand, but for the grace of God and the strength He imparted.”¹⁵

The writer remains dazzled by A. J. Tomlinson’s multi-faceted responsibilities and duties as the church progressed. It therefore, does not come as a great shock when extensive problems arose, resulting in what finally became known as the ‘great disruption’ of 1923 which resulted in a major split in the organization that forever changed the landscape of the church from that time until now. A brief look at the first presiding bishop of the Church of God, which eventually evolved into two prominent organizations, the Church of God and the Church of God of Prophecy, provides the reader with good insight as to how this office was originally treated and developed, especially in earlier formative years.

A culture seems to have been developed and cultivated over the years in the Church of God of Prophecy around the office of the presiding bishop becoming just as much administrative as apostolic and spiritual and at times more administrative than spiritual. Even today, the Church of God of Prophecy seems to have preserved the ambiguity of this tradition.

A. J. Tomlinson appeared to have juggled the two aspects of the office relatively successfully for a number of years initially. The records, however, strongly indicate that this proved to be too much for one person to handle and manage adequately after a while. As a true apostle of the faith and first presiding bishop of the Church of God, A. J.

15. Tomlinson, *Diary*, 245.

Tomlinson's contributions and accomplishments were phenomenal and cannot be denied or downplayed as one reviews the history. However, the writer can only imagine how much more he could have accomplished if he had been unyoked from the heavy administrative demands and responsibilities with which his office became so encumbered in his later years. Consequently, the writer questions whether too much is still expected from the occupants of the episcopal chairs of our churches on an international/regional/state/national level. Should there not be a return to a more New Testament system of operation as predicated by Scripture—a decoupling of the functions of that office—a separation of functions and responsibilities? The difficult task of changing the culture of the organization seems imperative. The writer asserts that failure to change will continue to produce unimpressive results and an organization that will soon move from having plateaued to a rapid decline, if it is not already there, as many reports seem now to be indicating.

The Role According to the Manual

According to the *Ministry Policy Manual of the Church of God of Prophecy*, the role and functions of the bishop are clearly outlined and defined. It states in summary form some of the functions:

1. Properly caring for the flock (1 Peter 5:2);
2. Shepherding in a Christ-like manner;
3. Declaring the counsel of God;
4. Protecting the flock against grievous wolves;
5. Watching in spiritual matters, and

6. Caring for the weak and needy (Acts 20:28-35).¹⁶

This summary clearly outlines an understanding of this role from a biblical perspective. However, the problem seems to arise when coming to the office of the presiding bishop. There, according to the Policy Manual, the role becomes a lot more diverse and complex. With the presiding bishop, there appears to be somewhat of a blurring of the lines. In addition to his spiritual duties, the role of the presiding bishop is expanded to include his administrative duties, his supervisory duties, and his appointive duties:

The presiding bishop must make monthly accountability reports to the appropriate offices on forms prepared for the same. He is required to supervise, with the Finance and Stewardship Committee, all funds received and disbursed by the national/regional/state treasurer. He is expected to evaluate all regional reports and surveys as a means of measuring job performance and projecting future goals; contact churches whose clerks are delinquent in reporting; supervise and/or delegate the care and maintenance of all regional properties. He is required to supervise all office administrative functions necessary to ensure proper oversight of the work assigned to the overseer.¹⁷

He is required to plant new churches and to be aggressively involved in new field evangelism.

The writer can clearly discern a trend developing or has been developed where this office is concerned. It has become heavily slanted on the side of the administrative and the executive. It has become riddled with administrative demands and responsibilities. It calls for attention to details that could be very taxing and time-consuming, especially when the means to execute certain functions are almost non-existent. As a result, questions arise such as, how can certain functions that are required to be executed, be adequately fulfilled without the necessary financial provisions? How

16. Hamby, *Ministry Policy Manual*, 100.

17. Hamby, *Ministry Policy Manual*, 50.

are new churches to be planted and new field evangelism encouraged without the necessary financial support system in place to effectively and viably sustain such operations? The question also arises, how effective can the office of the presiding bishop remain in terms of church growth expectations and other demands placed upon it, given the current financial structure of the organization?

Since the introduction of the new financial system in Church of God of Prophecy around the year 1996, where more funds were allowed to remain in the local church, thus creating financial strain and problems for the regional/national/state offices, very little has been done to negotiate a solution to help relieve the office of the presiding bishop from the financial stress that continues to plague it. Formerly, ten percent of all tithes from each local church was required to be sent in to the Regional office. This has now been reduced to two percent of church tithes voluntarily. These offices mainly now subsist on the pastors' and ministers' tithes and monies received from church ministry. A vast revenue stream has been drastically removed from its operations; however, just as much is still required from these offices in terms of function and expectations. They are still required to operate effectively and produce. They must creatively find a way. Notwithstanding, it also means that more attention must be given to this significant administrative aspect of the work, hence taking attention away from other spiritual matters like church planting and evangelism.

Faced with such dilemmas, it is the responsibility of the presiding bishop and his team to creatively find a solution. He must learn to devise a way to ensure that all aspects of the office are satisfied without the administrative outweighing and capsizing what he was primarily sent to accomplish and achieve—care for, nurture, protect and lead all those

who come under his jurisdictional care. It remains a delicate task indeed requiring great care and diligence, praying always for wisdom and spiritual direction.

A Call to Revisit the Call

A review of the ministry in the Church of God of Prophecy reveals that many who now serve in the demanding capacity of presiding bishops began their ministries as fiery youth evangelists, outreach workers, state youth directors, and dynamic cutting-edge pastors. Today, however, it would appear that many presiding bishops have now moved away from that intense evangelistic/pastoral fire and zeal that seemed to have propelled them into prominence in their earlier years. It would appear that what moved them with such passion in the first place has now cooled down and worn-off as they somehow become settled into the role of presiding and administrating.

It must be acknowledged that in the Church of God of Prophecy, in most instances, an appointment to the office of presiding bishop is unfortunately an appointment to stop pastoring a local church for fear of not being able to give proper attention administratively to the work at large. This may understandably be the case; however, at the same time, it must also be pointed out that if care is not taken, many who were called to pastor the flock can lose that cutting edge if the proper balance and perspective is not maintained. It appears that the mindset has developed that appointment to this office is some sort of a promotion or compensation for one's years of ministry and hard work. It gives some the mistaken sense of elevation or entitlement to now being served and to operate as a chief executive officer, instead of seeing it as a greater honor to serve even more, and to be a further blessing as a servant leader to the body of Christ.

Therefore, in the spirit of Christ, the presiding bishop is called upon always to remember the Christ who pointedly stated, “Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28). Like the chief shepherd, he serves, not seeing himself as one entitled to special honor and privilege, but with humility, he finds great pleasure in continuing to serve. Appointment to the office of presiding bishop should not be seen as an occasion or an appointment to stop pastoring. To the contrary, it is an appointment to greater service and a call to widen one’s area of ministry to accomplish greater good and for the greater glory of God. It is not a call to become enslaved by the bureaucracy of church administration or to sit anxiously and fretfully on the episcopal chair keeping busy. Sensing the dangers of an imbalanced approach to ministry, Pope Francis warned his up-and-coming seminarians that “the answer is not found sitting behind that desk.”¹⁸ This truth cannot elude the presiding bishops of the Northeast Region.

The message given in Lowney’s book of *Pope Francis* also rings clear. It states, “. . . if you want to lead, get real . . . don’t be out of touch; don’t hide in the office, behind numbers or behind ideology.”¹⁹ He further contends, “Commit to get your boots dirty.”²⁰ Nothing speaks with more clarity and relevance than these powerful truths coming from the lips of the one elected to serve as “bishop of bishops” to the world’s over one billion Catholics.

In the Northeast region, a review of the minister’s monthly reports serve as a constant reminder that the presiding bishop cannot sit back and relax, disengaged and

18. Lowney, *Pope Francis*, 63.

19. Lowney, *Pope Francis*, 69.

20. Lowney, *Pope Francis*, 69.

uninvolved, feeling in any way contented and satisfied. It shows that the facts are troubling and alarming. There is cause for great concern and, without doubt, cause for consternation, as the reports indicate the need for change.

Reality Check

A critical review of the statistics gives cause for great concern when the membership in the Northeast region has remained around 6,000 for the last seven years with only one church in the region registering a membership of over seven hundred. Out of the 59 churches which comprise the region, only four are reported to have over three hundred members and some of these numbers are debatable. Of churches over 200 members there are six. Churches with a membership of 100-200 are listed as ten, with the majority of churches reporting less than 100 members—32 to be exact. Of the 32 churches, 21 of them count less than 50 members on their membership rolls.

Table 1: Church Membership by State

STATE	CHURCHES	MEMBERSHIP	POPULATION
New York	38	4,802	19.85 million
Massachusetts	7	285	6.86 million
Connecticut	7	1069	3.58 million
New Hampshire	1	11	1.34 million
Vermont	2	38	633,657
Rhode Island	2	25	1.06 million
Bermuda	1	41	65,331

In the great state of New York alone, the membership of the Church of God of Prophecy currently stands at 4,802. One considers this against the backdrop of a state whose estimated population was about 19.85 million in 2017. In Connecticut, the

membership is 1069 with a population of 3.58 million in 2017. In the state of Massachusetts, the membership stands at 285, measured against a population of 6.86 million by the year 2017. In New Hampshire, the membership is 11 with a population of 1.34 million. In Vermont, the membership is 38 with an overall population of 633,657. In the island of Bermuda, the membership is 41 with a population of 61,349 in 2017. Just to think it gets worse with other states where there is just one functioning Church of God of Prophecy that can barely sustain itself. It has been reported that the last church for the Church of God of Prophecy in Maine was disbanded in 2016. Influenced by a misguided ecclesiology of the Church of God of Prophecy being the exclusive Body of Christ, to which all Christians shall eventually come, seems somehow to have caused many not to 'Go' as Jesus said but to sit and wait for an influx of multitudes to flow into the Church as was formerly erroneously taught and believed at one time.

After so many years of functioning and being in existence, it really causes the writer to sit up and pay attention and sound the alarm and take stock and see again how much of a course-redirection is needed. The writer questions if there is not a need for a massive culture change beginning with the office of presiding bishop. Looking at the region statistically, is this not itself a call to get out from behind the desk and to get in touch with people and begin pastoring and shepherding again like Jesus challenged his first bishops, the apostles of the Early Church, to do. To Go and make disciples.

Thesis-Project Overview

The problem has been defined. The remainder of the thesis-project has the following format:

Literature Review (Chapter Two)

This chapter is a critical review of literature containing pertinent information of the role and office of the presiding bishop, along with its challenges. The research takes an in-depth look at this office through the eyes of various authors and other faith traditions. The scope of the investigation encompasses a thorough examination of the subject matter also from a Catholic and Anglican perspective. The research looks at information presented in Chris Lowney's book as he skillfully examines Pope Francis and the reason he leads the way he does and finds it quite informative. It also reviews Pope John Paul II's views on the matter. This is significant to the Church of God of Prophecy. Research of the literature demonstrates that other faith traditions, like the Church of God of Prophecy, appear to view the bishop's office as both spiritual and administrative. As the direct offspring of the Early Church apostles, the bishop's office is first spiritual, but it is also seen as administrative due to its supervisory role.

An in-depth review of Harry Blamires' book, *The Christian Mind* presents a completely different viewpoint. Instead of seeing administration as characterizing the office of the bishop, Blamires is adamant that it is a spiritual role and should not be allowed to be coopted by the secular mindset which seems to have hijacked this sacred office. He contends strongly for this viewpoint. Blamires calls for a reversion of Scriptural intent for this office rather than the secular which seems to have superseded it. He sees the bishop as a Father-in-God.

The literature demonstrates the extent to which the Church of God of Prophecy needs to revisit its approach to this office. Is it strictly spiritual, or is it simply administrative, or is it both? If it is both, how does one keep it in perspective so that the administrative does not overpower and overtake the spiritual? In the Northeast, the administrative functions are indeed numerous and must be executed; however, attention must also be given to the real purpose and intention of this office — the care and cure of souls. The leader/bishop cannot become preoccupied with secondary matters while essentials are ignored.

Biblical and Theological Framework (Chapter Three)

In order to better understand this issue, chapter three of the thesis-project deals with the biblical and theological framework for the office of the presiding bishop. Jesus appointed twelve to be with him and to take the reins of leadership when he was no longer physically present with them. As churches were established and organized through Paul's missionary endeavors, apart from confirming the souls of the new disciples and encouraging them in their new-found faith, Paul and Barnabas also "ordained elders in every city and with prayer and fasting commended them to the Lord" (Acts 14:23). Paul also commissioned Titus to do the same in Titus 1:5. A list of requirements for Biblical elders and bishops is given in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and in Titus 1:6-9. The biblical review looks at this office as presented in Scripture. It goes back to the original intent and function of this office.

Acts 6:4 is enlightening as to the proper function of this office. Other passages of Scripture that speak clearly and bring much clarity to the church on this issue are 1 Peter

5:1-4 and John 21. These passages demonstrate the truth of this claim that the office of the presiding bishop is primarily pastoral and spiritual. The theological foundations and implications are vividly clear. Jesus, the good Shepherd and the Chief Shepherd, specifically left this charge to the bishops: “Feed my sheep.” The point is demonstrated and reinforced throughout Scripture.

Project Design (Chapter Four)

Seeing that the thesis-project revolves around presiding bishops and the challenges they face, the research will include individuals who presently serve in this capacity and those who have previously served. It will involve survey research! The population of the survey will be comprised of pastors in the Northeast Region. The survey will incorporate the use of a questionnaire to collect data from the pastors. Once the questionnaire is sent and returned, data will be compiled, evaluated, and interpreted. Receiving feedback of the respondents’ level of satisfaction with the office of the presiding bishop as it presently operates should be beneficial in mapping a way forward.

Outcomes and Conclusions (Chapter Five)

It is hoped that this thesis-project will stimulate further discussion and research into the reshaping and restructuring of this office. The desired result of this research is to promote a change of culture of the very minds of the occupants of the office to those on the field, who over the years have been conditioned to see this office as more administrative than pastoral and spiritual. It will begin with those who sit in the episcopal chair, refusing to be turned into administrative officers as the bishops of the Early Church

refused to bend or bow. It is further hoped that instead of being chained to their desks, secured in an office, the presiding bishop will be more driven to get involved evangelistically and to cast vision again looking to the fields that are white and ready to harvest. The need for more apostolic delegation is required from this office. Liberating this office from some of its present strains should result in greater growth and development of the Church of God of Prophecy in the Northeast Region.

CHAPTER 2

THE LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

One of the fundamental duties of the bishop according to Eugene Weitzel in his insightful work, *Pastoral Ministry In a Time of Change*, is that they must “stand in the midst of their people as those who serve.”¹ These words are reminiscent of the pastoral exhortation given by the Supreme Shepherd of the Church, Jesus Christ, to the first apostolic bishops of the universal church, when He unapologetically defined true leadership by stating, “Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many,” (Matthew 20:28). The bishop’s office is characterized by service; service to the Chief Shepherd, service to God’s priestly people, service to his family and service to his community. His life and times are shaped and conditioned by spiritual acts of service, so much so that Pope John Paul II, as he reflected on the ministry of the bishop, appropriately referred to it as a “priesthood of service.” He declared as he expounded on Matthew 20:28 – “To Serve! How I treasure those words! A priesthood of service—what an astounding title . . .”² They stand not over or above their people but in their midst serving.

As he particularly addresses bishops in his book *Rise, Let us Be on Our Way*, Pope John Paul II, strikingly points out the difference between authority and service, advancing the notion that greater emphasis should be placed on service than on authority,

1. Eugene Weitzel, *Pastoral Ministry in a Time of Change* (Milwaukee, IL: Bruce Pub. Co., 1966), 11.

2. John Paul, *John Paul II / Rise, Let Us Be on Our Way*, trans. Walter Ziemba (New York, NY: Warner Books, 2004), 49.

precedence, supremacy and privilege. He contends that the bishop must guide and lead, but he also hastens to indicate, “the faithful will listen to him and love him to the degree that he imitates the Good Shepherd . . .”³ Stating that the three main duties of the bishop are pastoral care, leadership and responsibility, he also makes it vividly clear, “It is not so much a sign of authority in the usual sense of the word, nor is it a sign of precedence or supremacy over others. It is a sign of service.”⁴ He is quite forceful in pointing out, “the bishop’s precedence takes the form of a generous love for the faithful and for the church in imitation of Saint Paul.”⁵

Called to Serve

In the Church of God of Prophecy and in other ministries some have not yet come to this realization that the bishop’s role is preeminently one of service and real pastoral care to the body of Christ. Instead they view it in terms of power and having the authority to appoint, disappoint and wield authority as a chief executive officer or managerial boss of a corporation. It is viewed in secular terms of promotion and elevation and almost as a graduation from pastoral work. Pope John Paul II is correct when he asserts, “There is always a problem achieving a balance between authority and service.”⁶ He declares, “Obviously a bishop has authority, but much depends on the way he exercises it.”⁷ He states, “If a bishop stresses his authority too much, then the people think all he can do is issue commands. On the other hand, if he adopts an attitude of service, the faithful

3. John Paul, *Rise, Let us Be On our Way*, 48.

4. Paul, *Rise, Let us Be On our Way*, 48.

5. Paul, *Rise, Let us Be On our Way*, 49.

6. Paul, *Rise, Let us Be On our Way*, 49.

7. Paul, *Rise, Let us Be On our Way*, 39

spontaneously tend to listen to him and willingly submit to his authority.”⁸ As he further discourses on the concepts of authority and service he indicates how authority should be manifested in the bishop. He concludes, “So a certain balance is needed. If as bishop says I am in charge here or I am only here to serve, then something is missing: He must serve by ruling and rule by serving.”⁹ To further strengthen his point, Pope John Paul II reinforces, “We have an eloquent model of this dual approach in Christ Himself: He served unceasingly, but in the spirit of serving God He was able to expel the money changers from the temple when this was needed.”¹⁰

This view has strong support from others. In *Shepherds After My Own Heart*, Timothy Laniak calls it “the benevolent use of authority.”¹¹ D. J. Tidball refers to it as “a subtle blend of authority and care,”¹² in his book *Skillful Shepherds: Explorations in Pastoral Theology*. Laniak declares, “Authority without compassion leads to harsh authoritarianism.”¹³ He further discloses, “Compassion without authority leads to social chaos,”¹⁴ elaborating further, “Shepherds must be able to express their leadership in a variety of ways.”¹⁵ Tidball as he describes the work of the shepherd writes, “it involved as much toughness as tenderness, as much courage as comfort.”¹⁶ He further posits, “The Apostle Paul lets the Corinthians choose which posture he will take when he comes:

8. Paul, *Rise, Let us Be On our Way*, 50

9. Paul, *Rise, Let us Be On our Way*, 50.

10. Paul, *Rise, Let us Be On our Way*, 50.

11. Timothy S. Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart: Pastoral Traditions and Leadership in the Bible*, vol. 20, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Leicester, England: Apollos, 2006), 247.

12. Derek Tidball, *Skillful Shepherds: an Introduction to Pastoral Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI.: Zondervan, 1986), 48.

13. Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart*, 247.

14. Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart*, 247.

15. Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart*, 247.

16. Tidball, *Skillful Shepherds*, 48.

‘What do you desire? Shall I come to you with a rod, or with love and a spirit of gentleness?’”¹⁷ (1 Corinthians 4:21 NASB)

Real Authority Defined

David Power shares similar views about the role of the bishop as he draws attention to his supervisory role in his book, *Ministers of Christ and His Church*. He makes it explicitly clear, “the ministry of the church as found in the New Testament is expressed in Terms of ‘*diakonia*’ rather than of power and authority (Acts 1:17, 25; 20:24; 21:19; Romans 11:13; 2 Corinthians 1:6:3; 11:8; I Timothy 1:12).”¹⁸ Often times in the execution of this office in the Church of God of Prophecy, this truth has been sadly overlooked, creating much mayhem and disarray. In further defining this salient point of authority and what it actually means in the context of the New Testament, Power observes, “There is no question of mere legal authority.”¹⁹ He claims that, “the faithful are required to respect and obey those that have the rule over them, not because of their titles, but because they keep watch over their souls as men who will have to give account to the Chief Shepherd and they must definitely serve as examples to the flock (1 Peter 5:3; Hebrews 13:17).”²⁰ He strongly implies that it is never a case of precedence and privilege based on title or of supremacy and elevation over others because of one’s position or rank in the ministry. Instead he makes the assertion that its real authority is founded in service and emanates from graciously shepherding the flock in the spirit and

17. Tidball, *Skillful Shepherds*, 48.

18. David N. Power, *Ministers of Christ and His Church: the Theology of the Priesthood* (London: G. Chapman, 1969), 27.

19. Power, *Ministers of Christ and His Church*, 28.

20. Power, *Ministers of Christ and His Church*, 28.

image of the Good Shepherd who served the sheep to the extent that He willingly gave His own life for theirs.

This is further borne out by Power's assertion, "Office and grace or office and fidelity in doctrine, are things that go together, and it is their combination in the office – holder which gives him the right to be heard and obeyed."²¹ Power's understanding that there is nothing absolute or exclusive about the bishop's authority since other ministries and other giftings also command respect and attention, has definitely eluded some and has been overlooked by others. He returns to this point again in his book when he recapitulates, "The key-idea in obtaining an adequate understanding of the nature of authority in the church is of course that of *diakonia*, or service as exemplified in Christ himself and in the apostles."²²

This is a concept that needs to be revisited and reinforced on a continued basis by those who are blessed to serve in the capacity of presiding bishop. Power keenly points out, "Jesus did receive authority (*exousia*) from the Father (Matthew 28:18), but He exercised it in His life on earth in a spirit of service."²³ He contends, "it is his long humble service which led to his complete self-abnegation which in turn led to his exaltation and him receiving a name above all names resulting in men becoming subject to his influence."²⁴ He maintains, "for the pastors of the church the extent of their authority is closely linked to their power to give good examples"²⁵ (1 Peter 5:3). The presiding bishop must always keep in mind that he comes in the spirit of the Supreme

21. Power, *Ministers of Christ and His Church*, 28.

22. Power, *Ministers of Christ and His Church*, 29.

23. Power, *Ministers of Christ and His Church*, 29.

24. Power, *Ministers of Christ and His Church*, 29.

25. Power, *Ministers of Christ and His Church*, 29.

Shepherd who expressly commissions him not to be as a lord over God's heritage as the secular rulers of the kingdoms of this world. The accent must be placed again and remain positioned on spiritual service to the community of faith and all the sheep that come under his tender care.

Similar thoughts are advanced in the book, *Biblical Leadership*, coedited by Benjamin K. Forrest and Chet Roden, which presents a theology for the everyday leader. They affirm, "While there is certainly a significant amount of teaching in the books of Peter, when it comes to specific instructions to leaders, particularly in 1 Peter, leaders are exhorted to lead by example rather than by command."²⁶ They make it abundantly clear by stating, "Leadership has its privileges, but they are not that one can order others around or demand a good salary."²⁷ In speaking about privileges they remind every contemporary leader, "They are rather the privileges that can identify the leader more closely with Jesus."²⁸ They reason, "The leaders get to be more self-giving, more patient and forgiving, and more willing to be the first to suffer without complaint to others."²⁹ They speak these words in reference to the pattern or approach on leadership as outlined in the Petrine epistles calling on elders to lead by being sacrificial examples to the flock and by following the exhortation to, "Be what you are or to live like the Father who gave you birth."³⁰

26. Benjamin Forrest, *Biblical Leadership: Theology for the Everyday Leader*, Biblical theology for the church. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Academic, 2017), 461.

27. Forrest, *Biblical Leadership*, 461.

28. Forrest, *Biblical Leadership*, 461.

29. Forrest, *Biblical Leadership*, 461.

30. Forrest, *Biblical Leadership*, 461.

Coopting of Roles

In another book, *The Christian Priest: Elder and Prophet*, David Power gives his take on how the confusion and misunderstanding over the role of the bishop originated and developed over the years. Although he writes from a Catholic perspective, it is not difficult to perceive how some of the misconceptions concerning this office have somehow been transmitted to other faith traditions including those of the Wesleyan Holiness Pentecostal organizations like the Church of God of Prophecy.

It is Power's understanding that the misconception began in earlier times when the role of the bishop expanded from a single local church to the bishop having to oversee or supervise multiple local churches or assemblies. From this he advances the notion that once they became responsible for a number of churches, instead of being the head of a single eucharistic community, a choice was imposed between a central administration and a frequent pastoral visitation.³¹ Power believes that with this transition the change was made. He states in plain words "From being a predominantly word-ministry the episcopacy thus became an administrative and governing authority."³² He further clarifies, "In this transformation there was also considerable influence coming from the Roman conception of law and jurisdiction, and the fact that the bishop received all the dignity of a Roman official was not without effect on the nature of the office."³³ He contends, "the change in the concept of the episcopal office is symbolized in the fact that the chair from which the bishop used to teach became the throne from which he ruled

31. David N. Power, *The Christian Priest: Elder and Prophet*, Library of Contemporary Theology (London, England: Sheed and Ward, 1973), 36.

32. Power, *The Christian Priest*, 36.

33. Power, *The Christian Priest*, 36.

them.”³⁴ His observation that emphasis became more concentrated on power than on service, is noteworthy.

The point is not to be lost upon the Church of God of Prophecy and those who occupy the seat of presiding bishop, especially when keeping in mind A. J. Tomlinson’s (first presiding bishop of the Church of God of Prophecy) acceptance of this view. He repeatedly spoke and made reference to James the Lord’s brother, “sitting upon his imperial and mediatorial throne,”³⁵ as the presiding bishop of the early church and as he saw himself as holding the same position. Tomlinson evidently subscribed to an inordinately elevated view of this office that certainly needed some adjustments.

Consequently, caution should always be observed that the role of the bishop does not become transmuted into something other than it was originally destined to be, as it has in some places – secular instead of spiritual, administratively – focused rather than apostolically anchored. The bishop, according to the original divine intent, teaches and serves instead of autocratically presiding over and ruling with a rod of iron. He operates from a place of humble service and not from a throne. He girds himself with a towel like his master ready to wash his fellow-traveler’s feet, benevolently serving even to the point of risking his life as he follows his master’s example. The presiding bishop is required to serve. The bishop does not sit upon a throne. He wears a towel — one of humility and service. His main preoccupation ought to be that of effectively feeding the flock and taking the oversight thereof in a manner worthy of commendation from the Good Shepherd.

34. Power, *The Christian Priest*, 36.

35. Ambrose J. Tomlinson, *Assembly Annual Address 1911-1921* (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Press, 1945), 45.

Not to be missed or dismissed are Power's concluding statements in reference to the misguided conceptions that have developed over this office. He professes:

In these later largely medieval developments there lies the roots of 'clericalism' and the exaggerated separation of hierarchy and laity: an Old Testament notion of priesthood, a monopoly of word and authority, an acquisition of dignity through posts and privileges of education . . . the ministry accepted as a career and profession and finally a lifestyle which cut a man off from the community.³⁶

Summarizing his thoughts by denouncing the disintegration of the bishop's office into such a secular state, Power concludes, "None of these factors belong in any way to the essential ministry: indeed, many of them are in contradiction with the note of service so highlighted in the New Testament in connection with all authority in the community of Christ's followers."³⁷

Like Power, who warned against clericalism and careerism, Pope Francis is just as unyielding, as he seeks to effect change in a church that has become so chained to the traditions of the past and out of touch with reality. He declares, "Unless we train ministers capable of warming people's hearts, of walking with them in the night, of dialoguing with hopes and disappointments, of mending their brokenness, what hope can we have for our present and future journey."³⁸ In this same book Chris Lowney the author adds his voice to the debate. He contends, "Many of us in leadership positions are too easily 'disintermediated' – cut off, alienated, insulated from reality on the ground."³⁹ He is on point when he states, "We might manage dozens of people, but know little about their personal lives and struggles."⁴⁰

36. Power, *The Christian Priest*, 37, 38.

37. Power, *The Christian Priest*, 38.

38. Chris Lowney, *Pope Francis: Why He Leads the Way He Leads* (Chicago, IL: Loyola Press, 2013), 53.

39. Lowney, *Pope Francis*, 59.

40. Lowney, *Pope Francis*, 59.

What a sad commentary when statements like these are made in reference to the presiding bishop who, above all else, is called upon to pastor the flock and care for eternal souls. Sitting in the episcopal chair, challenged by a multiplicity of bureaucratic demands and administrative responsibilities, the presiding bishop should remain determined never to become cut off from reality on the ground. He should strive to remain committed to the true nature of his calling—to feed the sheep and model the way of Christ for all to follow. It is more than managing people; it is genuinely caring, gently leading and getting one's feet dirty according to the words of Pope Francis. It is about walking where the people walk — “dirty footed leadership.”⁴¹ The point of solidarity with those who suffer is more than just a mantra, it should become a divine governing principle for those sitting in the bishop's chair.

Care of Souls

In his book *Pastoral Ministry in A Time of Change*, Weitzel sets forth quite an exhaustive and informative list of the spiritual duties and functions of the bishop. He makes it explicitly clear that the bishop has been primarily called to feed the flock and to preeminently execute spiritual work: to guard the faith, to care for souls, to oversee the churches. His entire list of duties, condensed into twenty points, bears conclusive testimony of this concept of the spiritual. Five points are selected from his list to illustrate this thought. They highlight some of the spiritual duties endemic to this office. Concerning bishops, he notes the following,

1. Dedicate themselves to their apostolic office as witnesses of Christ before all men.

41. Lowney, *Pope Francis*, 60.

2. Exercise the duty of teaching, which is one of their principal duties, and present Christian doctrine in a manner adapted to the needs of the time.
3. Seek out men and both request and promote dialogue with them since it is the mission of the church to converse with human society in which it lives.
4. Foster holiness among their clerics, religious and laity, according to the special vocation of each.
5. Strive to become acquainted with the needs of the people . . .⁴²

Therefore, in a nutshell he basically declares that the bishop's primary role is that of "the full burden of the care of souls."⁴³

Eugene Peterson expresses similar thoughts in *The Contemplative Pastor* and takes most unkindly to the secularization of pastoral ministry in the church. He takes issue with the carnal expression popularized today of "running a church."⁴⁴ He makes it pointedly clear, "the work of the pastor had been almost completely secularized, except for Sundays."⁴⁵ As a Presbyterian minister, he distinctly states at the beginning of his pastoral ministry, "I didn't like it and decided after an interval of confused disorientation that being a physician of souls took priority over running a church, and that I would be guided in my pastoral vocation by wise predecessors rather than contemporaries."⁴⁶ He further reinforces, "It should be clear that the cure of souls is not a specialized form of ministry . . . but is essential pastoral work."⁴⁷ Peterson boldly calls upon pastors and by implication presiding bishops to reclaim the vast territory of the soul as their preeminent responsibility. In fact, in his book there is an urgent plea for vocational recovery which he states is as endless as the task of theological reformation.⁴⁸

42. Weitzel, *Pastoral Ministry in a Time of Change*, 11.

43. Weitzel, *Pastoral Ministry in a Time of Change*, 10.

44. Eugene H. Peterson, *The Contemplative Pastor: Returning to the Art of Spiritual Direction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub., 1993), 58.

45. Peterson, *The Contemplative Pastor*, 58.

46. Peterson, *The Contemplative Pastor*, 58.

47. Peterson, *The Contemplative Pastor*, 59.

48. Peterson, *The Contemplative Pastor*, 60.

Larry Osborne also makes an invaluable contribution to this trend of thought in his book, *Lead Like a Shepherd*, as he summons the shepherds to do as the title states—lead as shepherds. He makes the illuminating argument that leading well is not so much about the task of leadership as it is about the heart of leadership. He takes his audience directly to the paradigm of leadership found in 1 Peter 5:1-3 and refers to it as the Peter principle. One of his basic premises is “it’s all about the sheep, not the shepherd.”⁴⁹ He reveals that the pastor must “think like a shepherd, serve with enthusiasm, lead by example and take the long view.”⁵⁰ It is plain that the care and cure of souls is the central focus of his writings. In his writings Laniak, like Osborne, places special emphasis on the epilogue of John and points to the inescapable fact that “following Jesus ultimately entails shepherding his sheep.”⁵¹

Pope Francis, in addressing his bishops in *The Joy of the Gospel* speaks about fostering a missionary communion in his diocesan church and reminds them that the principal aim in engaging in various processes as they shepherd, is not for “ecclesiastical organization, but rather for the missionary aspiration of reaching everyone.”⁵² He skillfully contends, “Frequently, we act as arbiters of grace rather than its facilitators. But the church is not a tollhouse; it is the house of the Father, where there is place for everyone, with all their problems.”⁵³ As he agitates against a bureaucratic, administratively-preoccupied church, caught up in a web of obsessions and procedures, Pope Francis speaks with vision and insight. He is correct in pointing out, “More than by

49. Larry W. Osborne, *Lead Like a Shepherd: the Secret to Leading Well* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2018), 41.

50. Osborne, *Lead Like a Shepherd*, 34, 35.

51. Timothy S. Laniak, *Shepherds After My Own Heart*, 222.

52. Francis, *The Joy of the Gospel: Evangelii Gaudium* (New York: Image, 2014), 27, 28.

53. Francis, *The Joy of the Gospel*, 38.

fear of going astray my hope is that we will be moved by the fear of remaining shut up within structures that give us a false sense of security within rules that make us harsh judges, within habits that make us feel safe, while at our door people are starving and Jesus does not tire of saying to us: Give them something to eat”⁵⁴ (Mark 6:37). The care of souls ought to be the bishop’s primary focus and preoccupation.

Spiritual More Than Administrative

It is not to be construed that the various authors consulted for this research are all oblivious to the fact that grave administrative responsibilities are attached to the office of the bishop. Weitzel in, *Pastoral Ministry In a Time of Change*, in no way presents such an idealistic picture. He, more than many, distinctly acknowledges this and dedicates an entire chapter in his book to categorically addressing this issue. The catalog of administrative duties he lists is indeed vast and extensive. However, as he strikingly concludes his insights on the future of pastoral ministry at the end of the book he states most vigorously, “The entire training of the students should be the formation of true shepherds of souls after the model of our Lord Jesus Christ, teacher, priest and shepherd.”⁵⁵ As he acknowledges the management responsibilities which undoubtedly pose a major challenge to pastoral ministry at every level, he like Peterson, prudently suggests ways to effectively deal with the minutiae of the everyday. Notwithstanding, he is still even more persistent in advancing the notion that all pastoral and priestly formation should be geared toward and centered on the shepherding and caring of souls.

54. Francis, *The Joy of the Gospel*, 39.

55. Weitzel, *Pastoral Ministry in a Time of Change*, 437.

To these authors there is unavoidable administration, but the salient point rings loud and clear that the primary task of the presiding bishop is first and foremost to shepherd the flock and to have spiritual oversight and supervision of the body of Christ. Weitzel is insightful in pointing out that he should exercise leadership in motivating others to help him achieve effective administration of his office.⁵⁶

Eugene Peterson paints a similar picture about the inevitability of ecclesiastical bureaucracy by stating, “The pastor is not, and should not be, exempt from the hundred menial tasks or the administrative humdrum.”⁵⁷ He plainly declares, “These also are pastoral ministry.”⁵⁸ However, he hastens to point out, “But the only way I have found to accomplish them without resentment and anxiety is to first take care of priorities.”⁵⁹ He cautions, “If there is no time to nurture these essentials, I become a busy pastor, harassed and anxious, a whining compulsive Martha instead of a contemplative Mary.”⁶⁰

Fully aware of the frenzy of busyness and the insane flurry of activities confronting the bishop at almost every angle, Pope Francis stressed to the Jesuit seminarians he once trained before his papal election, “a daily schedule for prayer, reading, reflection and a commitment to sustaining and being punctual at it.”⁶¹ Failure to do so can certainly cause the bishop to be caught up in a flurry of activities, doing much, accomplishing little and lacking focus.⁶² He once expressed, “Mere administration can no longer be enough. Throughout the world, let us be permanently in a state of mission.”⁶³

56. Weitzel, *Pastoral Ministry in a Time of Change*, 183.

57. Peterson, *The Contemplative Pastor*, 23.

58. Peterson, *The Contemplative Pastor*, 23.

59. Peterson, *The Contemplative Pastor*, 23.

60. Peterson, *The Contemplative Pastor*, 23.

61. Lowney, *Pope Francis*, 85.

62. Lowney, *Pope Francis*, 84.

63. Francis, *The Joy of the Gospel*, 23.

In the booklet, *Apostle In Our Midst*, David Joslin offers similar insight on the bishop's role, as also involving some administration. It is his view that "First, while overseer or supervisor is central to the role of the bishop's ministry, that does not mean an organizational executive of an ecclesiastical bureaucracy."⁶⁴ He clearly notes, "Instead his administration is intertwined with his preaching, his teaching, sacramental and liturgical roles in such a way that it is all of a piece."⁶⁵ Joslin sees the role as encompassing oversight of the flock administratively, but he presents the role as more spiritual than administrative. In his book, the administrative is not portrayed as overpowering or eclipsing the spiritual. He asserts, "In all things he is to be a faithful pastor and wholesome example of the entire flock."⁶⁶ Joslin stands in agreement with Laniak when, in conclusion, he observes that elders are to be shepherds of the Church of God. They must pay attention to the needs of the flock.⁶⁷ It certainly goes beyond administrative oversight. Coming to terms with the fact that the administrative functions and demands are a necessary component of the bishop's office, the literature overwhelmingly calls for a prioritizing of the spiritual over the administrative.

A Father-in-God

Whereas other authors are prepared to give in and make concessions on this point of administration, Harry Blamires is adamant that this should not be the case at all. He is fiercely opposed to the idea of the bishop becoming or being called an administrative

64. David B Joslin, *Apostle in Our Midst: The Office of Bishop* (Cincinnati, OH: Forward Movement Pub, 1980), 5.

65. Joslin, *Apostle in Our Midst*, 5.

66. Joslin, *Apostle in Our Midst*, 4.

67. Laniak, *Shepherds After My Own Heart*, 232.

officer. In his book, *The Christian Mind*, he completely denounces this notion and vehemently stands against this trend. Without any apologies, he unashamedly avows that the bishop is not an administrative officer. He convincingly makes the powerful argument that the role of the bishop is sacred and should not be denigrated by any means. He stridently makes the point absolutely clear. He opines, “The bishop is a Father-in-God. In practice he has been turned into an Administrative Officer.”⁶⁸ He emphasizes the point by elaborating, “Thus the appointment to bishoprics of men distinguished neither for their piety, their spirituality, nor their pastoral wisdom is nowadays defended on the grounds that in modern context a bishop must be a good administrator.”⁶⁹

Blamires demonstrates in his writings how completely at odds the two concepts are, claiming that one belongs to the realm of the sacred and the other to the secular. It is his contention that the bishop is supposed to traffic in spiritual affairs whereas the administrator is thoroughly worldly. To substantiate this, he asserts, “One hesitates to go to the cynical length of asserting, ‘He is a good administrator’ is a mere euphemism for he is a thoroughly worldly man.”⁷⁰ As he forcefully makes his case, he states that the equation between the episcopal and the administrative is intolerable. He is resolute in declaring, “It is necessary therefore to make the bishop once more a Father-in-God by stripping him of his administrative function.”⁷¹ He further contends, “A fit and proper beginning would be to nominate to bishoprics only men of known spiritual and pastoral gifts who will refuse to be turned into administrators.”⁷²

68. Harry Blamires, *The Christian Mind: How Should a Christian Think?* (Vancouver, Canada: Regent College Pub., 2005), 58.

69. Blamires, *The Christian Mind*, 58.

70. Blamires, *The Christian Mind*, 58.

71. Blamires, *The Christian Mind*, 58.

72. Blamires, *The Christian Mind*, 58.

The fact many are now being called or referring to themselves as administrative bishops would come across as an oxymoron to Blamires. The bishop should speak with spiritual authority, representing the spiritual and the administrator, the secular and worldly. According to him there should be a complete uncoupling of the roles. Faced more and more with this conundrum, it is hoped that more presiding bishops will consider the solid counsel of Blamires and go for a decoupling of these two vital strands. The bishop is more than a mere official representative of the church. Being divinely called, he passionately serves and should be fitted for the task of spiritual service and not be thwarted in his endeavors to serve as spiritual father to the flock. This is a divine calling!

Pope John Paul II, makes his contribution to the ongoing debate in his book *Rise, Let us Be On our Way*, which is specifically addressed to the bishops. He too is adamant in his belief and insistence on the bishop being a father to the flock. He views the bishop not only as one who pastors the clergy and by extension all the sheep, but as one who is supposed to be a true father in the faith. He makes the point by drawing reference to a particular bishop, Adam Stefan Sapieha, who served as an immeasurable influence upon his life. He states, “Maybe the priests respected him because he was a prince, but they loved him first and foremost because he was a father that cared about people.”⁷³ He then notes, “This is what counts most of all: a bishop must be a Father.”⁷⁴ As he concludes his thought on the topic, he emphatically points out, “There is no doubt that the episcopate is

73. Paul, *Rise, Let us Be On our Way*, 134.

74. Paul, *Rise, Let us Be On our Way*, 134.

an office, but a bishop must resist with all his strength any tendency to become a mere official. He must never forget that he is a Father.”⁷⁵

In the Catholic faith tradition, it is noteworthy that a candidate for the episcopacy is asked this key question among others in the presence of the people at his ordination — “Are you resolved as a devoted Father to sustain the people of God and lead them in the way of salvation in cooperation with the priests and deacons who share your ministry?”⁷⁶ At their ordination services there is a solemnity and an aura of sacredness and intensity that characterize the very ceremony. Even before the actual service, time is set aside for much prayer, meditation and consecration in preparation for the office. With this understanding the writer queries if more could not be done in preparation of candidates to this office in the Church of God of Prophecy, to enhance the awareness of the sacredness of the office and their sacrosanct responsibilities to serve and function at this level of ministry. The question, “Are you resolved as a devoted father to sustain and lead,” remains a biblical question that should be posed and affirmed publicly along with other declarations as a part of the ordination service in the Church of God of Prophecy.

This thought is deeply embedded in Scripture and is not incongruous with the general tenor and teachings of the Holy Writ. Paul’s writing to the church at Corinth help place this thought in greater perspective. He claims:

Even though you have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. Therefore, I urge you to imitate me. For this reason, I am sending to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church (1 Corinthians 4:15-17).

75. Paul, *Rise, Let us Be On our Way*, 137.

76. Paul, *Rise, Let us Be On our Way*, 61.

The Apostle Paul unabashedly and repeatedly declares his heart-felt love for the saints at Corinth as a caring father for his own children in spite of their inconsistencies in the faith. His love ethic shines through his writings to all his converts and to all the saints. It speaks of the church as family. Forrest and Roden, in their book on *Biblical Leadership* address the strong familial connection and relationship the Apostle Paul shared with the churches he birthed. As they address prevailing conditions of today's church they declare:

The time is past for church as a utilitarian, consumer commodity that exists to service the spiritual needs of its constituency. The time is past for consumer Christianity. The time is past for celebrity pastors, relationally isolated from the people they teach, delivering wares by means of video feeds from remote sites. The time is past for church as a business. Especially where God's leaders are concerned.⁷⁷

This crucial lesson cannot fall on deaf ears. The essential fatherhood of the bishopric must be rediscovered and vitally reincorporated into the very fabric of the functioning of every presiding bishop in the Church of God of Prophecy and certainly that of the Northeast Region. It is a call that goes beyond the mechanics of checking things off on one's checklist. It speaks to the very essence of what the bishop is called to portray and represent, giving himself in total surrender to the Good Shepherd and being a real spiritual father to the household of faithful believers.

Called to Shepherd the Flock

David Joslin, in his essay on *Apostle In Our Midst*, is a strong proponent of this view. To him it is an inescapable fact that the bishop is supposed to be a faithful pastor to his flock and a wholesome example to the entire flock of Christians under his care. The

77. Forrest, *Biblical Leadership*, 437.

bishop, by the very nature of his office, oversees and supervises the flock. However, as previously stated and implied, it is undeniable that he does so or is required to do so by pastoring. He should be a faithful, loving shepherd of the flock. He is basically called to shepherd. The thought of shepherding should never be dismissed or excluded from the presiding bishop's thought processes. Joslin makes the claim that, "He is a pastor in proclaiming the gospel, guarding the faith, unity and discipline of the church, celebrating the sacraments, ordaining clergy, leading the Church throughout the world and all the rest."⁷⁸ He demonstrates sound knowledge of the shepherding role when he declares and outlines how the pastor's role squares tidily with the roles played by the biblical shepherd in overseeing the lives of his flock. To further illustrate this, he states:

- He cuddles the sick lambs
- He finds good grazing land
- Moves flock along
- Yanks sheep back from danger
- He protects the flock
- He searches for good grazing land
- He oversees
- He knows his sheep intimately
- He leaves the many to go after the one that is lost
- He carries the lamb in his arms.⁷⁹

Joslin is correct in pointing out, "The word pastor connotes the warmth of personal touch."⁸⁰ Furthermore he states, "We look to a bishop not only to fulfil his pastoral role in supervision, but also to show forth something of the Good Shepherd with all the personal warmth that image connotes."⁸¹ He is careful to mention that the bishop in a very real

78. Joslin, *Apostle in Our Midst*, 29.

79. Joslin, *Apostle in Our Midst*, 29.

80. Joslin, *Apostle in Our Midst*, 29.

81. Joslin, *Apostle in Our Midst*, 29.

way should keep in mind that he is pastor of the pastors that serve in his territory or region and by extension he also pastors all the sheep.

It is notable that in the Church of God of Prophecy, the first presiding bishop, A. J. Tomlinson, chose to continue pastoring a local church years after he was selected to serve as presiding bishop of all the churches. He continued to pastor until it was almost practically impossible for him to do so adequately. However, a review of the history and literature indisputably indicates that pastoring and shepherding the sheep was never far from his heart. His instructions to the pastoral ministry of the Church at large are most illuminating. His message given on “Responsibility of Pastors” in the book *God’s Pioneer* illustrates this point quite forcibly. He states, “And indeed, he has the care of souls – never dying souls. It is his duty to keep them, feed them, bless them, and give account of them. The Scripture deals quite roughly with unfaithful pastors...The pastor is a shepherd...Preaching is not all for pastors to do.”⁸² The bishop is one who shepherds the flock.

Speaking from practical experience, Pope Francis, in his first formal sermon given to commemorate the Catholic priesthood’s establishment right after his papal election was most forthright in addressing this issue. He authoritatively exhorted the priests to be good shepherds. He boldly called upon them, “To be so deeply inserted ‘in the midst of their flock’ that they were living with the smell of the sheep.”⁸³ He reminded them of the biblical anointing of Aaron the high priest and told them that their priestly anointing, “is not intended just to make us fragrant, much less to be kept in a jar, for then

82. A. J. Tomlinson, *God’s Pioneer*, vol. 4, Heritage Series (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing, 2012), 63-66.

83. Lowney, *Pope Francis*, 65.

it would become rancid...and the heart bitter.”⁸⁴ He told them to “go out of themselves to the outskirts where there is suffering, instead of hanging back and becoming intermediaries, managers, the sort of priests who never puts his own skin and his heart on the line.”⁸⁵

In his book, *Pope Francis*, Chris Lowney makes strong reference to the concept of service and servanthood, reminding his reader that they are here to serve rather than be served. He speaks distinctly about creating a culture of service. He shows how this spirit of service and shepherding is uniquely exemplified in the lifestyle of Pope Francis. Lowney refers to an incident that took place soon after Pope Francis was ordained a bishop to showcase his point. He states, “Not long after he was appointed a bishop one of his priests was hospitalized for an operation and as a fellow priest describes the incident: he spent the whole night at the hospital, concerned about the priest’s health.”⁸⁶ The priest then made the remarkable comment, “That really struck the rest of the clergy, because they had never seen an archbishop who spent the whole night in the hospital with one of them.”⁸⁷ It shows with great relevance what the presiding bishop is sent to do. He is sent to serve his so-called subordinates with love and pastoral care. He gives his own life. He empathizes. He makes commitment to serve and by so doing shares and shows the heart of the Good Shepherd. He displays love through acts of sacrificial service. He is called upon to deny the trap of self-absorption, called upon not to be honor-obsessed, money-obsessed or self-obsessed. He serves others.

84. Lowney, *Pope Francis*, 65.

85. Lowney, *Pope Francis*, 65.

86. Lowney, *Pope Francis*, 46.

87. Lowney, *Pope Francis*, 45.

Larry Osborne contributes substantially to this line of thought when he signifies that there is a marked difference between the hireling and the shepherd. He indicates this by pointing out the major difference can be seen in the questions they ask. He states, “The shepherd asks, What do the sheep need? The hired hand asks, What’s in it for me?”⁸⁸ He contends, “Too often our sin nature, coupled with our ‘watch out for number one culture’ has made the wrong question seem like the right question.”⁸⁹ He proclaims, “And whenever that happens it’s hard to lead a flock well.”⁹⁰ He reverts back to the previous contention, “The right question is always, What do the sheep need? It’s what a real shepherd asks.”⁹¹

In shepherding the sheep, Pope John Paul II makes the valid point of the bishop’s home being his diocese. He claims this is not only because he lives and works there, but because it is the place where he must daily manifest his fidelity to the church. He asserts that it is the bishop’s obligation to be resident in the parish, area or territory where he serves. He declares, “The bishop must be with his church at all important moments. He should never leave it for longer than a month, unless he has a serious reason.”⁹² He makes the salient point eloquently, “Like a good ‘paterfamilias’ he is constantly with his family, and if ever he has to be away from them he misses them and wants to return as soon as possible . . . He is with them firstly in prayer and then in action.”⁹³ Like the Good Shepherd he constantly watches over and cares for his sheep. Presiding bishops ought to

88. Osborne, *Lead Like a Shepherd*, 41.

89. Osborne, *Lead Like a Shepherd*, 42.

90. Osborne, *Lead Like a Shepherd*, 42.

91. Osborne, *Lead Like a Shepherd*, 42.

92. Paul, *Rise, Let Us Be On Our Way*, 143.

93. Paul, *Rise, Let Us Be On Our Way*, 144.

reside among the people they are sent to serve. Every effort should be made to make this a reality.

With honesty, simplicity, and substance Eugene Peterson reminds the reader that a pastor is “a person who is passionate for God and compassionate with people.”⁹⁴ He speaks passionately about being a pastor who prays, a pastor who preaches and a pastor who listens. He constantly addresses the need for the pastor to declutter his schedule and give undivided attention to the One who leads besides still waters, so cultivating relationship with Him that it would result in effectively leading the sheep beside still waters and through the valley of the shadow of death and darkness. There must be, he says, “a deliberate withdrawal from the noise of the day, a disciplined detachment from the insatiable self,”⁹⁵ so that one can effectively shepherd the sheep and cause them to lie down in green pastures. He insightfully questions, “How can I lead people into the quiet place beside still waters if I am in perpetual motion?”⁹⁶ He further queries, “How can I persuade a person to live by faith and not by works if I have to juggle my schedule constantly to make everything fit into place?”⁹⁷

This review of the literature strongly points in the direction of the spiritual taking precedence over the administrative. The Church of God of Prophecy should take a serious look again at the office of the presiding bishop as it relates to the present supervision of their churches and as it relates to the organizational setup of every region including that of the Northeast region, where at least 58 of its churches function. The need of addressing a change of culture in reference to this office is imperative, and the general thinking and

94. Peterson, *Contemplative Pastor*, 15.

95. Peterson, *Contemplative Pastor*, 20.

96. Peterson, *Contemplative Pastor*, 19.

97. Peterson, *Contemplative Pastor*, 19.

expectation of this church in relation to the functioning and role of this office should be adjusted.

The care and cure of souls must remain of paramount importance for the effective execution of this office according to its original divine intent and purpose. The preeminent task of the presiding bishop is that of pastoring the flock and passionately caring for the eternal souls of the sheep under his care. He is mandated by the Supreme Shepherd to so do. Though beset with the inevitability of administrative contingencies, it would help for the presiding bishop to become intentional and remain focused on being first and foremost a shepherd of the flock and to so rearrange and prioritize his agenda. It was Jesus' primary injunction to the first apostolic bishops—feed my sheep.

CHAPTER 3

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

It is said that Gregory the Great repeatedly complained that “under the guise of the bishop’s office he was drawn back into the world, and that he was more entangled in worldly cares than he had ever served as a layman.”¹ He further reveals that “In that high office he is pressed by the bustle of secular affairs.”² In another passage, he is reported as saying, “Such great administrative burdens weigh me down that my mind cannot at all rise to heavenly things.”³ He states, “I am tossed by many waves of causes and after that quiet leisure I am afflicted with the storms of a troubled life; so that I may rightly say ‘I have come into the depths of the sea, and the storm has engulfed me.’”⁴ This may seem sad but to a great extent, Gregory the Great is describing how many presiding bishops feel—overwhelmed with administrative burdens, swamped with bureaucratic intricacies and overburdened with the secular, constantly pressed beyond measure.

Gregory’s willingness to speak so honestly and openly about the reality of sitting on the episcopal chair is not only fascinating but very insightful. It helps bring to light a truth that exists concerning this office, from times of antiquity to modern times. This office can both be intensely spiritual and fiercely administrative at the same time. Apparently, according to the instructions and implications of Scripture, they both must be

1. Calvin, John. *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion*, vol 2 (Peabody, MA: Westminster John Knox Press, 1960), 1132.

2. Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1132.

3. Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1132.

4. Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1132.

executed, however, to what extent one aspect is allowed to prevail and dominate over the other, depends upon the bishop's viewpoint and understanding of Scripture. Much depends on his biblical and theological framework.

In Light of Scripture

The presiding bishop in his ministry of oversight is solemnly charged to always keep in mind Jesus, who remains for every God-called minister, the author and finisher of his faith and who is supremely set before him as “the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls” (1 Peter 2:25; 1 Peter 5:4). He is the primary example and role model for presiding bishops. His Word still remains the guidebook and road map that ought to be followed. The true manual for the presiding bishops comes from the sacred writings of the Holy Book. The lodestars that are given as a pattern to be followed are the supreme shepherd and the apostolic bishops found in the New Testament Scripture. Their mantra became, “But we shall give ourselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:4). They took seriously their divinely mandated commission of oversight to shepherd the flock (John 21:15-23). Their primary roles of shepherding of the sheep and pastoring the flock in general remained non-negotiable.

The bishop's role must be defined in light of Scripture, how this office must be executed and defined. Will it go by the biblical pattern mandated in Scripture or by the demands of the people and of the times? This remains a burning question that troubles the bishop in every age and time and calls for honest research and review. Gregory the Great, who very reluctantly became presiding bishop of the city of Rome in the sixth century,

echoes the cry that should be in the hearts of many presiding bishops—to be able to simply devote more of their time and their whole life to the true office of bishop.

Commissioned to Pray

That the bishop's task and role are preeminently spiritual is powerfully reinforced by the insightful text of Acts 6:4. The wording in the King James version is conspicuous and forceful. It states, "But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the word." It conveys a sense of urgency and stubborn, unswerving determination.

Albert Barnes, in his notes on the whole Bible, declares, "The original expression used here denotes 'intense and persevering' application of a thing, or unwearied effort in it."⁵ He further expounds, "It means that the apostles designed to make this their constant and main object, undistracted by the cares of life and even by attention to the temporal needs of the church."⁶

It takes the reader back to Acts 1:14, where it is recorded, "They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers." It becomes the norm that wherever one turns in the book of Acts, the practice and discipline of prayer can be seen, felt and experienced. It permeates the life of the early church. It energizes all its operations. It rekindles the spark of evangelism and revives the missionary focus of this apostolic church. The urgency of prayer consumes and dominates every aspect of their lives, public and private. Barnes denotes, "They will give themselves to the duties of their office, one part of which was public prayer and

5. Albert Barnes, "Overview - Albert Barnes' Notes on the Whole Bible," StudyLight.org, accessed November 14, 2018, <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bnb.html>.

6. Barnes, "Notes on the Whole Bible."

another preaching.”⁷ Adam Clarke in his commentary on this text states, “The continual proclamation of the Gospel of their Lord; and to make this, effectual to the souls of hearers, they must continue in prayer: a minister who does not pray much, studies in vain.”⁸ Presiding Bishops need always to keep this truth in mind. Making time for persistent, continual prayer is a strong requirement for this office’s continued effectiveness and successful operations.

The solution to the problem delineated in Acts 6 is quite illuminating. Witherington asserts, “If the seven are assigned the task of waiting on tables, then the twelve according to verse 4 will be able to devote themselves completely to prayer and the serving (διακονία) of the word.”⁹ He contends, “Both ministries are seen as forms of public religious service or as they would be called in the Greek world, λειτουργίες (liturgies).”¹⁰ Speaking with one voice and with unmistakable clarity, the twelve episcopal leaders of the young church concluded, “It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables” (Acts 6:2). That they saw themselves primarily as men called to pray and preach, cannot be successfully repudiated or sidelined as a peripheral theme from this passage.

It is remarkable to observe how they never seemed to lose sight of what they felt was their true calling and purpose as apostolic bishops. They unhesitatingly made it undeniably clear, speaking in very terse terms, their determination to remain committed

7. Barnes, “Notes on the Whole Bible.”

8. Adam Clarke, “Adam Clarke Commentary,” StudyLight.org, accessed November 14, 2018, <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/acc.html>.

9. Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Carlisle, U.K.: Eerdmans, 1998), 250.

10. Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 250.

to the task which they viewed as divinely mandated—commissioned to pray, compelled to preach the word on a consistent basis.

Reverend Kirsi Stjerna in her book, *The Role of the Bishop*, coedited by Maria Erling, is resolute in pointing this out. She contends, “A bishop is one who prays.”¹¹ She formulates quite a comprehensive list of who the bishop is and what he does, his role and his office; however, heading the list is the fact that first and foremost the episcopal leader must be one who prays. The priority of prayer is accentuated. In all the many things a bishop is presumed to do it must all be characterized, saturated, and undergirded by prayer. The list is revealing. She emphasizes, “The bishop is one who prays, cares and makes God’s grace visible in the world through words and actions.”¹² She further elaborates, “A bishop is a fallible human being humble, and dependent on the grace he/she proclaims; a bishop depends on God’s grace; a bishop is called to lead and minister with the word and the sacraments; a bishop’s work is never done.”¹³

The point is driven home by references she makes to two outstanding bishops of the Lutheran faith tradition from different parts of the globe. Concerning Bishop Manas Buthelezi of South Africa, she claims that “prayer is a ‘must’ in his own life and work as a bishop.”¹⁴ A similar claim is made for Bishop Martin Lind, bishop of the diocese of Linkoping in the church of Sweden. She quotes Butelezi as speaking of the “vitality of prayer to his life’s work.”¹⁵

11. Maria Erling and Kirsi Stjerna, eds., *The Role of the Bishop: Changing Models for a Global Church* (Minneapolis, MI: Kirk House Pub, 2002), 147.

12. Erling and Stjerna, *The Role of the Bishop*, 147.

13. Erling and Stjerna, *The Role of the Bishop*, 147.

14. Erling and Stjerna, *The Role of the Bishop*, 150.

15. Erling and Stjerna, *The Role of the Bishop*, 150.

Bishop Martin Lind, in his discussion on the bishops in the Church of Sweden, advances the notion that the bishop is paid to pray. In fact, this is the subject title of his essay, “*Paid to Pray*.” He underscores, “The importance of the praying commission cannot be stressed enough.”¹⁶ He asserts, “For me this is my main duty. I am paid to pray. It is a privilege. I sincerely believe that this is of great importance, that somebody regularly prays for the diocese, for the priests, for the deacons, for all the fellow workers, all the members, and for the future work.”¹⁷ He revealingly observes, “Pray for me as I pray for you is the bishop’s words according to the Church of Sweden liturgy at the reception of the bishop in the diocesan cathedral.”¹⁸

Amos Yong, as he commented on Acts 6 in *The Future of Evangelical Theology*, speaks about the apostles’ ingenuity and insightfulness to expand the leadership into a more egalitarian system by putting migrants in charge to handle the existing problem.¹⁹ With this decidedly revolutionary approach to ministry, the researcher gets the impression that they were inspired to do so through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. As they continued to pray and seek divine guidance, the Holy Spirit guided and superintended all their missionary endeavors, giving wisdom to supersede and circumvent every administrative challenge and hurdle they faced.

The episcopal leadership of the early church unflinchingly resolved, “But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word” (Acts 6:4). This is what they were categorically called by the Chief Shepherd to do, and they remained

16. Erling and Stjerna, *The Role of the Bishop*, 150.

17. Erling and Stjerna, *The Role of the Bishop*, 63.

18. Erling and Stjerna, *The Role of the Bishop*, 63.

19. Amos Yong, *The Future of Evangelical Theology: Soundings from the Asian American Diaspora* (Downer's Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), 170.

convinced in the face of daunting challenges that the divine intent for their role and calling had not changed, in spite of the rapid growth of the church and the increasing demands and changing dynamics of ministry. One thing they knew for sure was that prayer and ministry of the word must never be circumvented or relegated to second place. They must remain foremost and paramount in the life of any presiding bishop. It tops the list of his duties. It was theirs to determine whether they would remain a spiritual house, courting the favor and power of God, or a bureaucratic one; whether they would be truly a pneumatic house or a carnal house; a symbolic house or one characterized by signs and wonders; fully apostolic or mainly administrative or both.

That is still the choice the episcopal leadership of Christ's church of the twenty-first century must make. Commissioned to pray! It remains critical! Others who were better suited were called upon to give fair and undivided attention to essential social services and church administrative matters. It must never be dismissed or deemphasized: the bishop is preeminently called first and foremost to a life of prayer and consecration! In Acts 6, they prioritized placing the spiritual over the administrative, indeed establishing a paradigm for bishops of all succeeding generations to inculcate and seriously emulate.

Men of God Filled with the Spirit

In commenting on the passage in Acts 6, Ben Witherington is careful to point out that Luke does not gloss over the problems of the early church community. Instead of dwelling on the problems, he points to the fact that Luke hastens to indicate how the problems are resolved. He remarks, "He is apparently more interested in the external

sources of problems and possibilities.”²⁰ In this case Witherington advances, “The solution the apostles arrive at here is a rather novel one to antiquity.”²¹ He alleges, “One commentator has called it the first example of affirmative action - those with political power generally repressed complaining minorities; here the apostles hand the whole system over to the offended minority.”²² Witherington further advocates, “The discussion here and the resolution of the problem should probably be seen in the light of the Old Testament and early Jewish provisions for widows and other marginalized people in a highly patriarchal society (*cf.* Exodus 22:22; Deuteronomy 10:18; 14:29; Psalm 146:9).”²³

In *The New International Commentary of the New Testament on the Book of the Acts Revised*, F. F. Bruce shares similar views concerning the unfolding of this incident between the Grecian Jews and the Hebraic Jews, with the Grecians complaining that their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. He hastens to point out, “it was over a practical issue, and not over a matter of theological importance, that disagreement became acute.”²⁴

Not only does Bruce make the salient point that the men chosen all seem to be Hellenist, agreeing with other commentators, but he is also meticulous in highlighting the criteria outlined by the apostles governing the selection of the seven. He draws attention to the fact, “These men should be of honorable reputation, so that their probity might command complete confidence. They should be wise men, competent in administration

20. Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 248.

21. Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 248.

22. Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 248.

23. Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 248.

24. F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, New International Commentary on the New Testament, rev ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 120.

and also qualified to deal wisely with a situation in which such delicate human susceptibilities had to be considered; above all they must be men of God, filled with the Spirit.”²⁵

25. Bruce, *Book of the Acts*, 121.

Spiritual Leadership

Bruce is correct in observing, “These might be regarded as ideal requirements for all church appointments.”²⁶ He makes the compelling case, “If such men could be found to take charge of the distribution and see that no further cause for justified complaint arose, the apostles would be free to devote their undistracted attention to directing the church’s regular worship and to preaching the gospel.”²⁷

It is noteworthy that even here in the selection to the office of the deacon, which is supposed to seemingly cater to the temporal affairs of the church, the men chosen are required to be “full of the Spirit and wisdom” (Acts 6:3). Oswald Sanders, in *Spiritual Leadership*, makes this point abundantly clear when he contends, “Even the office of deacon . . . require people full of the Holy Spirit.”²⁸ He opines, “These offices were to be known for integrity and judgement but preeminently for their spirituality.”²⁹ He advances the notion, “A person can have a brilliant mind and possess artful administrative skill. But without spirituality, he is incapable of giving truly spiritual leadership.”³⁰ Sanders’ erudite comments in relation to this thought serve very well here. He informs, “The spirit did not delegate authority into secular or carnal hands even when a particular job has no direct spiritual teaching involved; all works must be spirit led and filled.”³¹ He further interjects, “Likewise today selection by kingdom leaders, must not be influenced by worldly wisdom, wealth, or status. The prime consideration is spirituality.”³² He

26. Bruce, *Book of the Acts*, 121.

27. Bruce, *Book of the Acts*, 121.

28. J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership: A Commitment to Excellence for Every Believer* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2007), 77.

29. Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership*, 77.

30. Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership*, 77.

31. Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership*, 77.

32. Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership*, 77.

pointedly remarks, “Selecting leaders apart from spiritual qualifications leads always to unspiritual administration.”³³

He strikingly emphasizes, “The church at Jerusalem listened to the Apostle’s instructions and selected seven men who possessed the one necessary qualification.”³⁴ He posits, “As a result of their Spirit-filled works, the church was blessed: the men selected to distribute food and earthly care were soon seen as the Spirit’s agents in dispensing heavenly blessings.”³⁵ He hastens to showcase the fact, “Stephen became the first martyr for Christ, and his death played a large role in the conversion of Paul.”³⁶ F. F. Bruce agrees with this idea when he contends, “While the Seven were appointed to service as almoners, it is plain that their activity was by no means confined to this.”³⁷ He makes it clear, “Stephen and Philip, at any rate, were well equipped for public leadership in general and for the particular forms of service in which Luke describes them as engaging—Stephen for the defense of the gospel and Philip for the work of evangelism.”³⁸

Sanders hastens to emphasize, “Leaders who are faithful in the exercise of their gifts prepare the way for promotion to greater responsibilities and usefulness.”³⁹ He makes it vividly clear that the early church leadership, “did not hold office by apostolic selection of popular election but by divine appointment.”⁴⁰ Using Acts 20:28, Sanders is factual in pointing out that bishops, overseers and elders are made so not by the church

33. Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership*, 78.

34. Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership*, 78.

35. Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership*, 78.

36. Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership*, 78.

37. Bruce, *Book of the Acts*, 122.

38. Bruce, *Book of the Acts*, 122.

39. Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership*, 78.

40. Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership*, 79.

but by the Holy Spirit. They are, therefore, not just accountable to the church but to the Holy Spirit to feed and nourish the *ekklesia* of God.

Witherington stands in agreement with other interpreters of the text when he insightfully states, “Notice that here as in the discussion of overseers and deacons in 1 Timothy 3 the main issue is character, not special talents or abilities, and on their being full of the Spirit (*cf* 2:4; 4:8, 31).”⁴¹ It is his viewpoint that “The reference to (σοφία) (*cf* 6:10) here, refers to the ability to discern the right thing to do when choices must be made; and it may be that Luke is referring to Spirit-inspired wisdom (*cf* 18:24 -25).”⁴²

When speaking of Stephen who heads the list of those selected to serve in Acts 6, F. F. Bruce contends, “He is more particularly described as ‘a man full faith and the Holy Spirit’—a description whose relevance and significance appear very early as the story proceeds.”⁴³ Having the proper spiritual qualifications is paramount in New Testament leadership. The bishop must be one filled with the Spirit, a man of faith and wisdom as prescribed in the text. It requires more than being skilled or trained in administrative affairs.

Their accent on spiritual leadership at every level is indisputable. The very highest standards are attached to selection of individuals chosen to serve at every level of service in the New Testament church. Bishops are no exception. They serve as the exemplars of this kind of leadership.

41. Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 250.

42. Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 250.

43. Bruce, *Book of the Acts*, 121.

Process of Careful Selection

Bruce points out, "It was the community as a whole that selected the seven men and presented them for approbation; it was the apostles who installed them in office."⁴⁴ One notes the involvement of the whole church in the process which seems to be a very sacred, solemn occasion indeed. Witherington reports, "The seven came forward, and the twelve prayed and then laid hands on them."⁴⁵ As one surveys the passage, it is difficult indeed to disregard the strong prayer motif. The acknowledgement of the role of the Divine must also be highlighted. No act seems to be performed without consulting and securing the divine will and the procuring of divine favor and consent.

The passage gives eloquent testimony to the seriousness and sacredness with which they viewed ministry in the New Testament. Before the selection, prayer dominates, and after the selection it remains an essential part of the process. As noted above, the exercise of prayer is intrinsic to the entire process. No business is transacted without it even in the sphere of the seemingly secular and administrative. In fact, Scriptures inform the reader that the head of the church, the divine Shepherd, spent all night in prayer before calling and ordaining the first apostolic bishops of the Early Church (Luke 6:12-17). The same principle is observed in Acts 1:21-26. The Apostle Paul adopts the same method in Acts 14:21-24. When Paul and Barnabas are called and set apart for the sacred task of evangelism - prayer, fasting, and the laying on of hands form an integral part of the ceremony of ordination.

Calvin, in *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, painstakingly points to this truth. He is diligent in accentuating that much prayer, fasting and Godly reverence went

44. Bruce, *Book of the Acts*, 122.

45. Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 251.

into the selection of bishops. He decries the low ebb of spirituality that surrounded the selection and operations of this office in his day and time. The Early Church apostles understood it as doing the most serious thing of all. He claims, “They dared not attempt to do so without the highest reverence and care.”⁴⁶ He states that as they chose bishops and elders in New Testament times, “They especially applied themselves to prayers in which they sought for counsel and discretion.”⁴⁷

In reference to Acts 14:23, F. F. Bruce informs, “In these cities they strengthened the young churches which they had so recently planted, putting their administration on a firm basis by appointing suitable members as elders.”⁴⁸ He further indicates, “They would be true spiritual guides to their brethren. . .”⁴⁹ Witherington, like Calvin, carefully points out, “This act of appointment was accompanied by prayer and fasting, and thus they were committed to the Lord, the one in whom they had so recently put their trust.”⁵⁰ In the Tyndale New Testament Commentaries on Acts, Howard Marshall is keen to point this out also, “The manner of appointment, involving prayer and fasting, was based on that practiced at Antioch.”⁵¹

Without question, therefore, the process of selection of bishops, deacons, and elders was one taken very seriously by the Early Church. They considered the bishop as one who is called by God, ordained by the Highest to perform spiritual work in the *ekklesia* of God. It was by no means a secular or ordinary appointment. It involved much diligent prayer and thoughtful consideration and careful selection. Should any less be

46. Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1064.

47. Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1064.

48. Bruce, *Book of the Acts*, 296.

49. Bruce, *Book of the Acts*, 296.

50. Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 429.

51. I. Howard Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Pub Co, 1980), 241.

expected today? Should not the selection to this high office be seasoned with much prayer and fasting as exemplified in the Scriptures, not just after the selection but even before?

It is certainly not just a reward for faithful service or a promotion out of pastoral work to sit in elevation and dominance over others. Calvin cautions, “Those ordained are not to think themselves promoted to an honor but charged with an office, which they are with solemn attestation obligated to discharge.”⁵² Calvin’s comment is not only very true but sobering in light of the office of the bishop and in an effort to remedy some of the misconceptions that have developed over this office. He sadly comments, “They confuse human things with divine.”⁵³

The Church of God of Prophecy, in its process of selection to the episcopal office, would do well to pay much attention to the extreme sacredness with which the New Testament approached this enterprise. A sense of holy awe prevailed. For them, it was no ordinary matter! They sought the divine will not just by prayer but fasting became an integral part of the process. They endeavored to appoint only men of deep spirituality to supervise every aspect of the church’s operation. It is crucial that these lessons be fully grasped and put into practice in the church in these eschatological times. They were driven by a theology of mission that caused the church to be soundly established, to effectively stand against heresies and evil workers, and to endure beyond the fleeting changes of time. Just as Jesus invested and poured into them, they saw the need to identify, appoint, and anoint intensely spiritual leaders to lead and supervise the spiritual needs and directions of the church. That same paradigm is worthy of emulation today!

52. Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 241.

53. Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1087.

Ministry of the Word

The presiding bishop is supremely called to the serious preaching/teaching of Biblical truth. In Acts 6:4 the second factor that is expressed defining the main responsibilities endemic to the bishop's office is that of "ministry of the Word." Adam Clarke, in his commentary on this text, aptly refers to it as "the deaconship of the word."⁵⁴ The same word that is used to define ministration in Acts 6:1—*diakonia*—is used in connection with this Word. It is called the ministry of the Word. It is indeed a service. It is from this word, the English word "deacon" is derived. According to the *Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible*, this word *diakonia* means,

attendance (as a servant, etc.); figurative (eleemosynary) aid, (official) service (especially of the Christian teachers, or technical of the diaconate: - (ad_) minister (ing, - tration, -try), officer relief, service (-ing). From the noun *diákonos* (διάκονος), one finds the meaning, deacon, servant. Service, attendance, ministry:

- (1) Service towards a master or guest, at table or in hospitality (Lk 10:40; 1 Co 16:15).
- (2) Ministry, ministration, i.e. the office of ministering in divine things, spoken chiefly of apostles and teachers (Ac 1:17,25; 6:4; 20:24; 21:19; Ro 11:13; 1 Co 12:5; 2 Co 3:7-9; 4:1; 5:18; 6:3; Eph 4:12; Col 4:17; 1 Ti 1:12; 2 Ti 4:5,11).
- (3) In the sense of aid or relief as spoke of alms, contributions (Ac 11:29; Ro 15:31. . .⁵⁵

The definition makes it very plain that the bishop is more than ever a servant—a servant of the Christ, a servant of the church, a servant of the Word. He comes under the office of ministering in divine things. He traffics in the spiritual. He too in a real sense is also a deacon of the word in the truest sense. He must diligently apply himself and resources to the "deaconship" of the word. It is an integral, necessary part of his calling and office. A part of his compulsory duty is to apply himself to the continual

54. Clarke, "Adam Clarke Commentary."

55. Spiros Zodhiates, ed., *The Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible: King James Version* (Chattanooga:TN, AMG Publishers, 2008), s. v. "diakonia."

proclamation of the Gospel. He must do so with a sense of urgency that seemed to characterize these first apostolic bishops who were tasked with the careful, spiritual oversight of the *ekklesia* of God.

In both of his listings for the qualifications for bishop to Timothy and to Titus, the Apostle Paul is scrupulous in mentioning this fact—in I Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:9—“able to teach.” In Titus 1:9, he is even more explicit stating, “He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.”⁵⁶ The bishop must be able to teach the Word in order to encourage, and he must be able to rebuke and correct and refute false teachings. By proper preaching and teaching of the Word, false teachers and teachings must be reproved. In his commentary *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, Gordon Fee indicates that this is one item in the list that implies duties.⁵⁷ He contends, “This adjective recurs in 2 Tim 2:24 and Titus 1:9, whose contexts suggest that able to teach means the ability to teach the truth and to refute error.”⁵⁸ This message is repeated numerous times in Paul’s writing to the saints—the bishop must be absolutely devoted to the gospel.⁵⁹ This is how heresy and heretics are withheld and refuted according to the Apostle Paul in Acts 20:28-30. They are resisted and overcome by sound preaching and teaching of the Word.

There is no substitute for sound Bible preaching and teaching. In the power and spirit of Christ, the church and its leadership must go forth ready and determined to declare the truth to every generation, “Thus saith the Lord.” As Jesus most assuredly

56. Gordon D. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1989), 175.

57. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 81.

58. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 81.

59. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 175.

declared, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel . . .” (Luke 4:18), so too must the presiding bishop declare with all assurance and anointing, his eagerness and willingness to preach and to teach. He too must know that he is God’s messenger, sent from God, commissioned to speak as an oracle of God and to break the bread of life to a lost and dying generation. As much as he is called to give time to secret praying and seeking of God’s face, he must deliberately set time aside to the prayerful reading and studying of divine Scripture so that he can effectively feed the flock under his care, helping them to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ.

Calvin states, “Even when the church was in its worst state when it had well-nigh collapsed (surely it had deteriorated much from its ancient purity), it was not tolerable for any bishop to refrain from preaching.”⁶⁰ After lamenting the tragedy of many bishops failing to preach, he then concludes, “Therefore, it was a principle of long standing in the church that the primary duties of the bishop were to feed his people with the Word of God, or to build up the church publicly and privately with sound doctrine.”⁶¹ Gregory the Great, as he laments the sad state of the church in his times, cautions, “We forsake the ministry of preaching and add to our punishment, as I see we are called ‘bishops’ who have the name of an honorable office, not its power.”⁶² He further denounces, “For men have become so insane as to consider it beneath the bishop’s dignity to preach to the people.”⁶³

Dr. G. R. Evans, in his essay on the “*Power of Bishops, Checks and Balances in the Church of England*,” advances the view that, “The first priority of the bishop is the

60. Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1077.

61. Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1077.

62. Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1095.

63. Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1096.

ministry of the Word.”⁶⁴ He also admonishes that the ministry of the Word is a teaching ministry. He claims according to Luther, “Whoever has the office of preaching imposed upon him has the highest office in Christendom imposed upon him.”⁶⁵ He queries for the real bishop, “Is it still a question of Sola Scriptura? Is it still the case that Bishops ought to stick to the Bible and not get distracted by other bids for priority use of their time?”⁶⁶ Bishop Buthelezi of South Africa unashamedly declares, “. . . the bishop is the spiritual leader and shepherd of the diocese. The presupposition is that the power of the church is basically spiritual sacraments.”⁶⁷ In speaking about the ministry of oversight, Michael Cooper White reminds the reader that St. Paul can be viewed as an apostolic bishop or overseer of faithful teaching and effective mission. “St. Paul preached the word, encouraged the faithful, helped plant new churches, and tended multiple communities of faith with personal visitation and by means of his correspondence. In short, he did a bishop’s work.”⁶⁸

The apostles spoke most eloquently of their main tasks in Acts 6:4. They were most careful to underscore the primacy of prayer and the ministry of the Word. It remained a driving force for them throughout the book of Acts. These themes are inescapably illustrated and accentuated. They prayed and preached. Presiding bishops are still so mandated.

64. Erling and Stjerna, *Role of the Bishop*, 76.

65. Erling and Stjerna, *Role of the Bishop*, 76.

66. Erling and Stjerna, *Role of the Bishop*, 76.

67. Erling and Stjerna, *Role of the Bishop*, 89.

68. Erling and Stjerna, *Role of the Bishop*, 89.

Ministry of Spiritual Oversight

Scriptures attest to the fact the bishop's role is predominantly that of spiritual oversight and in administering pastoral care to the *ekklesia* of God. New Testament scriptures such as John 21:15-23, Acts 6:1-7, 1 Peter 5:1-4, 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, and 1 Timothy 5:17 strikingly substantiate this viewpoint. Acts 20:28 is another text that uncompromisingly advocates this truth. Here the apostle Paul is forceful in pointing this out to the Ephesian elders as he brings them together to address them for the very last time on his way to Jerusalem and then to Rome. He solemnly cautions them, "Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the Church of God, which he bought with his own blood" (Acts 20:28).

He unequivocally informs them that beyond anything else it is a ministry of oversight, designed and developed by the Supreme Shepherd, to build up and nourish the *ekklesia* of God! It is a ministry divinely instituted and put in place by the Holy Spirit to ensure that proper nourishing and sustenance are given to the body of Christ for its continued growth and development. He is unflinching in reminding them that they were placed there in a position of oversight (as bishops/overseers) by the Holy Spirit to take care of God's sheep. His choice of words is significant and impressive. In this passage Acts 20:28, the people of God, the church, is referred to figuratively as a flock. The bishops under Christ serve as shepherds and pastors of the sheep. It is evident from the passage that it is God's church and God's sheep, and the overseers/bishops are placed over all the sheep at the behest and leading of the Holy Spirit. The overseers and bishops are chosen from among the sheep to help supervise and care for the sheep. This same truth is eloquently stated in 1 Peter 5:2, "Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your

care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve.”

The irrefutable point is made that bishops and elders are placed there and allowed to serve by the divine leading and pleasure of the Holy Spirit. He, the Holy Spirit, is the one who selects and places pastoral oversight in the *ekklesia* and He should be the one leading and guiding the bishops to lead and feed. Therefore, because He is in charge and because the church belongs to Him, it indeed should be a spiritual house with spirit-led and Spirit-directed leaders pastoring and shepherding the house in all aspects of its operations. They are His sheep and the sheep of His pasture (Psalm 100:3). Bishops do not own the sheep. They are called upon according to the divine writ to prayerfully exercise spiritual oversight of the sheep under their care, (Acts 20:28). They gently lead, guide, supervise, and tend to the welfare of the sheep.

In the *Key Word Study Bible*, the word bishop is defined in this fashion:

epískopos, from and (in the sense of); a superintendent, i.e. Christian officer in genitive case charge of a (or the) church (literally or figuratively):—bishop, overseer. In the New Testament, used of offices in the local churches, overseers, superintendent, (Ac 20:28; Php 1:1; Tim 3:2; Ti 1:7; used figuratively of Jesus (1 Pe 2:25.) This name was originally simply the Greek term equal to *présbutérōs*, which was derived from the Jewish polity.⁶⁹

Even in the definition of the word, the impression is received that this is first and foremost a Christian thing, a spiritual work. The bishop assists the divine Shepherd in overseeing, visiting, inspecting, looking after, and taking care of the sheep. The concept of being a dominant overlord—lording authority over others, simply managing and predominantly enmeshed in administration and bureaucracy—is not a concept that is

69. Zodhiates, *Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible*, s. v. “epískopos.”

conveyed in the definition of the term bishop “in God’s *ekklesia*.” He is a watchman. He is an officer of the church, *présbutéros*, elder; *poimen*, shepherd; *diakonos*, minister.⁷⁰

The supreme injunction given to the elders by the apostle Paul to these carefully assembled elders was to feed the flock and shepherd the sheep. “Be shepherds of the Church of God” (Acts 20:28), he instructs. It comes from the Greek word “*poimaino*” meaning,

to tend as shepherd (or figurative, supervisor): feed (cattle, rule). From *poimen*, shepherd. To feed a flock or herd, to tend. Used particularly (Lk 17:7, shepherding). Used figuratively to care for, provide: referring to kings and princes in regard to their people (Mt 2:6; Rev 7:17); in regard to pastors and teachers in the church (Jn 21:16; Ac 20:28; 1 Pe 5:2). From the context to rule, to govern with severity, spoken of Christ ruling with a rod of iron (Rev 2:27; 12:5; 19:15). It implies the whole life of the shepherd as guiding, guarding and placing the flock in the fold, as well as leading to nourishment.⁷¹

This admonition in Acts 20:28 is reminiscent of Jesus’ post resurrectional official mandate to Peter in an effort to restore him after his threefold denial of Christ. “Feed my sheep,” is his unchangeable, solemn edict to Peter. Love to the Chief Shepherd is undeniably demonstrated by the bishop’s tender care and feeding of the sheep placed under his watchful care.

The ministry of spiritual oversight is a truth that is seriously addressed even in the Old Testament. In Ezekiel 34, the Shepherd of Israel, the Sovereign Lord, issues a more than scathing indictment against the delinquent shepherds for their atrocious acts of woeful negligence and blatant unconcern for the sheep under their care. Neglecting to feed and prayerfully nourish the sheep, they feed and care for themselves with no real concern or burden for the welfare and protection of the sheep. As a result, the Sovereign

70. Zodhiates, *Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible*, s. v. “*epískopos*.”

71. Zodhiates, *Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible*, s. v. “*poimaino*.”

Lord declares, “Woe to the Shepherds of Israel who only take care of themselves! You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have ruled them harshly and brutally” (Ezekiel 34:2-15). Speaking through the prophet Ezekiel, the Lord sends a powerful message of rebuke for those responsible for the spiritual oversight of His people. He further states, “...I am against the shepherds and will hold them accountable for my flock. I will remove them from tending the flock so that the shepherds can no longer feed themselves” (Ezekiel 34:10). A similar message is conveyed in Jeremiah 23:1-4. In Jeremiah 3:15, a positive theme of hope is reintroduced when the Lord promises to give his people pastors according to his heart who will “feed his people with knowledge and understanding.” Therefore, even from Old Testament times it was the divine intent for the shepherds to feed the flock and to guide them with keen spiritual oversight.

Timothy/Titus Model

It is in Paul’s pastoral epistles to Timothy and Titus that one finds the necessary requirements and qualifications for bishops and deacons outlined. Nowhere else in Scripture is this defined so concretely for the church. It is still the script that the church goes to, to help identify and select candidates for eldership ministry and service in the body of Christ. In 1Timothy 3:1 he declares, “If any one sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task.” Gordon Fee makes the valid point to which other commentators agree, that “the list has more to do with qualifications than duties”⁷²

72. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 78.

In both lists, the one given in Timothy and the one in Titus, one finds similarities; however, there are also some minor differences that are noticeable. He seems to proceed in a more orderly fashion in the list found in Titus, according to Fee. Fee also mentions there are five vices to be avoided and the first two form a pair which are not found in 1 Timothy 3.⁷³ He claims that the bishop should not be “(1) overbearing (self-willed) or (2) quick-tempered. (3) He should not be given to drunkenness or (4) not violent. The last vice to which he alludes is (5) not pursuing dishonest gain.”⁷⁴ Paul is also sure to mention this in the list given for deacons. As Gordon Fee comments on this, he cites Barret as saying, “it is the sordidness of making a profit out of Christian service, rather than dishonest gain, that is here condemned.”⁷⁵

The bishop according to the apostle Paul is required to manage his own family well. He is expected to take care of his home first. A similar thought is expressed in the Titus list. Paul seems to see an obvious connection between the home front and church—one’s familial relations and how he relates to the church. This is a crucial point obviously not to be missed by modern day presiding bishops and leaders. Oftentimes there can be such a preoccupation with church related matters and circumstances that the home becomes disorganized and in disarray. Caution should be taken that the bishop who has a family, should not allow himself to become disconnected and disjointed from them as he tends even to the spiritual affairs and other exigencies of church work. Care of his own family should occupy a very high place on the bishop’s agenda. This is a point not to be lost upon presiding bishops whose tasks can become so demanding that the home front

73. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 78.

74. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 174.

75. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 174.

can be woefully neglected and overlooked in the transactions of the everyday, creating hardships for all involved. Episcopal leadership of the Church of God of Prophecy must be ever cautious of these God-inspired biblical truths and instructions.

Fee stresses, “The overseer then, must manage his family well, because he must take care of God’s church.”⁷⁶ He expounds the word for “manage” is used again of the elders in 1 Timothy 5:17 (“direct”) as it was earlier in 1 Thessalonians 5:12 (“are over”).⁷⁷ He further defines, “It carries the sense of either “to rule, govern” or “to be concerned about, care for” (*cf* “devote themselves to” in Titus 3:8).”⁷⁸ He notes, “The clue to its meaning here lies with understanding the companion verb about the church in verse 5, to take care of, which carries the full force of that idiom in English. That is to take care implies both leadership (guidance) and caring concern.”⁷⁹ He concludes, “In the home and church neither has validity without the other.”⁸⁰ The presiding bishop governs or guides the church with loving, caring concern.

Paul’s list of qualifications for the bishop’s office, given to the apprentice – bishops, Timothy and Titus serving alongside him, coincide greatly with each other but there are also some observable differences as seen in table 2.

Table 2: Bishop Qualifications in Timothy versus Titus (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:1-9)

TIMOTHY’S LIST	TITUS’ LIST
1. Above Reproach	Blameless
2. Husband of one wife	Husband of one wife
3. Temperate	Children in subjection
4. Self-controlled	Not overbearing
5. Respectable	Not quick-tempered
6. Hospitable	Not given to drunkenness
7. Able to Teach	Not violent

76. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 82.

77. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 82.

78. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 82.

79. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 82.

80. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 82.

TIMOTHY'S LIST	TITUS' LIST
8. Not given to drunkenness	Not pursuing dishonest gain
9. Not violent but gentle	Hospitable
10. Not quarrelsome	Loves what is good
11. Not a lover of money	Self-controlled
12. Manages family well – <i>his children obey him with proper respect.</i>	Upright
13. Must not be a novice	Holy
14. Good reputation with outsiders	Disciplined
15.	Keeps hold of the deep truths

Apart from the other salient qualities which must inhere to the one selected for episcopal oversight, that of being “blameless” is of paramount importance. It tops the list in 1 Timothy 3. It is also mentioned twice in the passage in Titus. The bishop apparently must live a life that is above and beyond reproach in the church and to those outside. In Titus he is called upon to be sober, just, holy, temperate (v8). He is called to live a life of unrebukable holiness. He is therefore called upon to live a life of complete dependence upon the Holy Spirit. Blameless comes from the word *anepilēmptos* meaning “of good report, one who demonstrates a higher morality on which no blame can be found to base an accusation.”⁸¹ It seems to imply that the bishop must live a scandal-free life of high moral and ethical standing. Called to a life of exemplary holiness is a thought that cannot be easily dismissed in reference to the qualifications that must exemplify the life of the one called to exercise spiritual oversight in the *ekklesia*. Failure to grasp these truths and to govern one’s life by the principles laid out can result in devastating consequences for any who occupies this high office. The apostle Paul goes at great length to outline necessary qualities significant to this office. The bishop seeks to live a clean, holy, upright, exemplary life worthy of the calling and the one He is called to consistently

81. Zodhiates, *Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible*, s. v. “*anepilēmptos*.”

represent. He follows in the footsteps of the chief shepherd. He desires Christlike holiness.

Conclusion

Scriptures support the view that the role of the bishop is preeminently spiritual. Nowhere in Scripture is it admonished or affirmed that those who sit in the episcopal chair should abdicate their God-assigned commission of steadfast praying and ministry of the Word to become mainly preoccupied with the ministry of tables and secular affairs. The administrative should never be allowed to override or supersede the divine vocation of the spiritual as evidenced by Scriptures. The accent and focus should be on the spiritual, intentionally cultivating a spiritual house over one where administrative concerns are predominant. The presiding bishop is first and foremost shepherd to the flock.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT DESIGN

Introduction

In the Northeast Region Church of God of Prophecy (New York, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine, Rhode Island and Bermuda) which covers a fairly vast geographical territory, administrative concerns and matters perpetually abound, often obscuring or overshadowing the spiritual, preoccupying much of the bishop's time and energy. The goal of this study is to help clarify and identify what the true role and function of the bishop should be. In order to gain a better understanding of the role, the researcher thought it best, not only to interview two presiding bishops from the organization presently serving in other areas, but also to glean insight from the pastors who are presently served by this office in the Northeast Region, collecting pertinent data and feedback from them. It was also found beneficial to conduct a focus group composed of a younger set of emerging leaders.

The pastors were chosen mainly because they are the group immediately affected and impacted by the bishop's role and office. They are the individuals with whom he interacts the most and which he is principally required to pastor, motivate and inspire. It is generally the case in the Church of God of Prophecy that most presiding bishops are selected from among the pastors. He is then seen as pastoring the entire region by way of or through the pastors. Feedback therefore from this target population is integral to the execution of this project.

Method of Investigation

To achieve the desired goal of this study the researcher chose the Research Questionnaire as the survey instrument. The interviews with the two presiding bishops and that with the focus group were semi-structured. They were recorded verbatim and then later transcribed. The questions used are attached to this chapter and recorded as Appendix, B, C, and D. According to professor Dr. Bryan Auday, in his Research Methodology Class, the advantages of using the Research questionnaire as the survey are numerous. He indicates the Research Questionnaire is capable of:

- Collecting a large amount of data in a brief amount of time
- Yield data that can be tabulated and scored
- Collecting small amounts of my own data that fill in gaps of literature
- Can be sent out ahead of time to do follow-up if needed
- Provides snapshot of a particular topic and how respondents feel about subject matter
- Proficient in encouraging participants to give honest answers
- Capable of producing data that is not too difficult to understand¹

Careful attention was also paid to the design of the questions according to the instructions given by Professor Auday to:

- Keep language simple
- Keep questions short
- Avoid double barreled questions
- Avoid leading questions
- Avoid poorly defined terms
- Try to ensure questions mean the same to all respondents² (see Appendix B).

1. Brian Auday, “Nuts and Bolts of Design” (LO-3-1) in “DMin Research Methodology” (Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, 2009), accessed March 14, 2018, <https://sakai.gccts.edu/access/content/group/90032/Module%201/Outlines/RM%20Outline%203.pdf>.

2. Brian Auday, “Nuts and Bolts of Design.”

The questions used in the research questionnaire were somewhat different to those used in the interviews with the two presiding bishops, whose sessions were longer, more interactional and reflective. The questions were asked, and they then shared quite frankly and openly from their hearts, sharing unreservedly how the role has shaped and affected them and how they have been able to some degree to shape and affect the role. It was interestingly insightful how fairly similar their views were though coming from two different areas and from two different frames of reference. It seemed to reinforce the fact that the pressures of the office go beyond geographical areas, affecting all who serve in that capacity in various unique ways!

Participants in the Survey

The pastors were informed approximately three weeks before the research questionnaires were sent out to them via email. This was announced in the Regional Leadership Conference conducted on October 13, 2018. They were informed that the researcher was a Doctor of Ministry candidate with the Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in Boston, Massachusetts, USA and that he was conducting a survey and was requesting their help and participation. It was sent out to all pastors in the Northeast Region, made up of 56 males and 4 female pastors.

In reference to the demographic characteristics of the pastors presently serving in the Northeast region of the Church of God of Prophecy , there are 3 Caucasian Americans; 4 Haitians; 1 Dominican; 1 Egyptian; 2 Virgin Islanders; 10 African Americans; and 37 Jamaicans. They come from various different backgrounds, nationalities, racial compositions and ethnicities, however, the studies seem to imply that

whoever is served by the office of the presiding bishop the demands and expectations of the office remain similar. It seems to go beyond national, racial, cultural, state or provincial boundary lines. Feedback and data from this target population was found to be most informative and enlightening when coming to the way this office is perceived and conceptualized. It is regrettable that more did not readily respond by the deadline, as was hoped.

The both presiding bishops interviewed for this project, oversee vast areas geographically, with one within the Continental USA and the other outside. They were both initially contacted by phone. In both instances the researcher traveled quite a distance in order to conduct the interviews in person. The perspectives in reference to the role and office of the presiding bishop were quite enlightening. They were both asked identical questions (see Appendix C). The questions were simply asked, and their responses recorded, which were then compared, contrasted, analyzed and interpreted. The first interview, which was conducted on November 19, 2018 lasted 1 hour and 11 minutes, the second interview conducted 9 days later on November 28, 2018, lasted 1 hour and 43 minutes.

The Focus Group was made up of younger emerging ministers of the Church of God of Prophecy from the Northeast Region. Two were from Connecticut, and the remaining four from various parts of New York. There was one female participant. They ranged in age from 32 to 44. This interview with the focus group was also recorded and transcribed as much as possible. The questions submitted to the group can also be found in Appendix D.

Out of the questionnaires sent to the pastors, there was a response rate of 51.67%. The survey package included a cover letter to the participants (See Appendix A), describing the researcher and what they were required to do, as well as expressing appreciation for their involvement. It also assured them of complete anonymity and confidentiality. They were explicitly asked not to place their names on any of the materials, informing them that the information they provided will be presented only in summary format in combination with responses from other participants.

Survey Instrument

The survey questionnaire sent out to the pastors contained a summary of 19 questions, beginning with a series of 4 questions using a scale of strongly disagree to strongly agree. They were grouped together to provide the necessary responses based on the stated goals of the study. The first 4 questions were more to clarify how the role and office of the presiding bishop are perceived and to see whether they are clearly defined in the minds of the pastors served by this office. This was followed by a series or section of five open-ended questions that required more short answers, allowing respondents to elaborate somewhat without having to select an answer. From this more qualitative data was received, providing the researcher more insight into how the respondents actually feel and think.

There were also five questions employed using the response scale of very dissatisfied to very satisfied. This section was designed to gage how satisfied respondents felt about the present functioning of the bishop's office, in matters ranging from the support they presently receive from the presiding bishop to his promotion of new field

evangelism and church-planting. The questions were fairly more subjective. The responses to these questions may help the presiding bishop assess present performance and make some needed adjustments in certain key areas.

The next four questions specifically had to do with term limits for the presiding bishop and to acquire a sense of how respondents view the presiding bishop pastoring a local church while endeavoring to supervise the work on a Regional level. These were also considered crucial, as strong feelings over these issues continue within the Church of God of Prophecy. The final question was stated not so much as a question as much as it was in the form of a drop box for respondents to indicate the following areas in which they felt they needed the most help from the office of the presiding bishop. Therefore, the pastors were crucial, to the project's success. They were the primary subjects surveyed apart from the two presiding bishops and the focus group.

Findings and Results

The descriptive analysis of the data was performed by calculating frequencies and percentages of the response categories associated with each survey question. The descriptive statistics were displayed in frequency tables. The survey instrument was geared toward capturing quantitative data relating to the pastors. It was also designed to capture qualitative information which helps in providing answers to the primary questions of this thesis-project. Excerpts from short narratives from the participants giving more feedback and insight will also be shared in this chapter.

Table 3: Role as exclusively administrative

Q1-Role of bishop best understood as exclusively administrative				
		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	13	43.3	43.3
	Disagree	7	23.3	66.7
	Neutral	3	10.0	76.7
	Agree	4	13.3	90.0
	Strongly agree	3	10.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	
Missing	System	1		
Total		31		

Out of the thirty pastors who responded to this survey, 13 or 43.3% strongly disagreed with this proposition, that the role of the presiding bishop is best understood as exclusively administrative, 7 or 23.3% also disagreed that it is administrative, giving a total of 20 or 66.6% who disagreed with this assessment of the presiding bishop's role as exclusively administrative. Three or 10% remained neutral, 4 or 13.3% agreed that it is basically administrative. They were joined by another 3 or 10% who strongly agreed with this view, giving a total of 7 or 23.3% respondents holding to the view that the role of the bishop is purely administrative. In fact, as noted only 3 or 10% strongly felt so. One gave no response.

The researcher notes from these statistics that an overwhelming majority are of the viewpoint that the bishop's role is not solely, or should not be exclusively, administrative. Though involved in much administration the inference is drawn that it transcends that.

Table 4: Primarily pastoral/shepherding

Q2-Role of bishop best understood as primarily pastoral/shepherding

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	7	23.3	23.3
	Disagree	4	13.3	36.7
	Agree	14	46.7	83.3
	Strongly agree	5	16.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	
Missing	System	1		
Total		31		

Of the thirty pastors who completed and returned survey, 7 or 23.3% strongly disagreed, 4 or 13.3% disagreed, 14 or 46.7% agreed with this concept of the bishop's role being primarily pastoral or that of shepherding, 5 or 16.7% strongly agreed with this perception, with only one giving no response.

It is noteworthy that the findings for Table 4 correlate well with Table 3 in terms of those who see the office as more pastoral than administrative with the exception of 1 or 3.2%. Those who did not see the office as exclusively administrative were 20 or 66.6%. Those who viewed the office as primarily pastoral were 19 or 63.4%. It is observed that there are no neutrals in Table 4. There are 4 more or 13.3% who do not see the role as primarily pastoral, giving a total of 11 or 46.6% as opposed to the 7 or 23.3% who see it as exclusively administrative. In any case those who view the role as spiritual far surpass those who view it the other way.

Table 5: More spiritual than administrative

Q3-I personally view role of bishop as more spiritual than administrative				
		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	5	16.7	16.7
	Disagree	6	20.0	36.7
	Neutral	6	20.0	56.7
	Agree	6	20.0	76.7
	Strongly agree	7	23.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	
Missing	System	1		
Total		31		

Out of thirty respondents 5 or 16.7% strongly disagreed with this, 6 or 20.0% disagreed, 6 or 20% took a neutral position, 6 or 20% agreed, 7 or 2.23% strongly agreed, one gave no response.

Here again it is interesting to note the variance when the questions of Table 3 and Table 4 are combined. The rate of neutrality doubles from Table 3 to Table 5. Those who disagree with the role being pastoral remain the same between Tables 4 and 5; 11 or 36.7%. However, when it comes to those who agree the numbers drop quite significantly. It moves from 19 or 63.4% to 13 or 43.3% in Table 5 with 6 or 20.0% choosing to remain neutral.

It causes the researcher to wonder or question how the term pastoral is interpreted by some respondents. The gap significantly narrows between those who agree with this statement and those who disagree. Thirteen or 43.3% agree it is more spiritual than administrative as oppose to 11 or 36.7% who disagree. Could it also be that there are those who see the spiritual as encompassing or including the administrative. They view both as similarly important or as equal sides of the same coin.

Table 6: Not clearly defined

Q4-I personally view role of bishop as not clearly defined

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	3	10.0	10.0
	Disagree	8	26.7	36.7
	Neutral	6	20.0	56.7
	Agree	7	23.3	80.0
	Strongly agree	6	20.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	
Missing	System	1		
Total		31		

From those who responded, it is obvious that the statistics of Table 6 closely resemble that of Table 5 with 6 or 20% remaining neutral. However, there are more who agree with the fact that the role is not clearly defined. Thirteen or 43.3% view the role as not properly defined whether from scripture or by the church. It is reported that only 11 or 36.7% see it as clearly defined.

This then is definitely an area that needs further exploration by the church and bishops in particular. It speaks to the fact that more teaching and attention should be devoted to this topic. It further highlights the lack of understanding and apparent confusion over this critical topic. It appears that there is a need for more clarity and definition when coming to the office and function of the bishop in the Church of God of Prophecy.

Table 7: Support from bishop

Q10-How satisfied are you with the quality of support from the bishop?

Valid		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Neutral	4	12.9	12.9
	Satisfied	12	38.7	51.6
	Very Satisfied	15	48.4	100.0
	Total	31	100.0	

The next five questions as stated above, take on a more subjective tone, having to do with level of satisfaction of job performance of the bishop in regard to particular areas and functions of ministry and leadership skills. To this question all the respondents reply with 4 or 12.9% remaining neutral. Of all the respondents 13 or 38.7% reported being satisfied, 15 or 48.4% claimed to be very satisfied giving a total of 27 or 87.1% satisfied to very satisfied with support from the presiding bishop. They are not so much general questions but more specific as to the actual functioning of the office, which serves the study by helping to enlighten and clarify what change or changes may need to be made to help bring about a more successful execution and operation of this office.

Table 8: Shepherding and encouraging

Q11-How satisfied are you with the bishop shepherding and encouraging?

Valid		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Neutral	5	16.1	16.1
	Satisfied	13	41.9	58.1
	Very Satisfied	13	41.9	100.0
	Total	31	100.0	

Of the thirty-one respondents, 5 or 16.1 remained neutral, 13 or 41.9% stated they were satisfied, 13 or 41.9% reported they were very satisfied. A total of 83.8% indicated satisfaction with the presiding bishop shepherding and encouraging them. The table appears to be showing that along with the other demands and expectations of this office, the shepherd's role features prominently. The presiding bishop serving as pastor seems to be a key element in the functioning of this office.

Table 9: Problem-solving skills

Q12-How satisfied are you with the bishop's problem-solving skills?

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Dissatisfied	1	3.2	3.2
	Neutral	7	22.6	25.8
	Satisfied	13	41.9	67.7
	Very Satisfied	10	32.3	100.0
Total		31	100.0	

To this question out of the thirty-one respondents, 1 or 3.2% claimed to be dissatisfied, 7 or 22.6% were neutral, 13 or 41.9% stated they were satisfied and 10 or 32.3 reported being very satisfied. Some points that may be derived from this table are that there will always be problems confronting the bishop's office. They come with the territory. Problems must be confronted.

Table 10: Ability to discover and develop leaders

Q13-How satisfied are you with the bishop's ability to discover and develop leaders?

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Dissatisfied	2	6.5	6.5
	Neutral	7	22.6	29.0
	Satisfied	18	58.1	87.1
	Very Satisfied	4	12.9	100.0
	Total	31	100.0	

There were thirty-one respondents to this question with 2 or 6.5% claiming to be dissatisfied; 7 or 22.6% were neutral, 18 or 58.1% indicated being satisfied; 4 or 12.9% stated they were very satisfied. It gives a total of 22 or 71% satisfied in this key area of leadership discovery and development.

Table 11: Church planting and evangelism

Q14-How satisfied are you in his promoting, encouraging, and modeling church-planting and evangelism?

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Dissatisfied	2	6.5	6.5
	Neutral	7	22.6	29.0
	Satisfied	16	51.6	80.6
	Very Satisfied	6	19.4	100.0
	Total	31	100.0	

Of the thirty-one respondents 2 of 6.5% stated they were dissatisfied; 7 or 22.6% remained neutral, 16 or 51.6% claimed to be satisfied; 6 or 19.4% reported they were very satisfied.

Table 12: Term limits

Q15-Do you believe we should have some form of term limits for the office of presiding bishop?

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	14	45.2	45.2
	No	9	29.0	74.2
	Unsure	8	25.8	100.0
Total		31	100.0	

Of the thirty-one who participated and responded to this survey question 14 or 45.2% responded in the affirmative, 9 or 29% said no and 8 or 25.8% were unsure.

The question of term limits for the office of the presiding bishop has long been discussed and debated in some areas of the Church of God of Prophecy. It is noteworthy that 17 or 54.8% say no and are unsure about this issue.

Table 13: Term limit recommendation

Q16-If you responded “Yes,” to term limits, what do you recommend?

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	4 years	2	11.1	11.1
	6 years	4	22.2	33.3
	8 years	8	44.4	77.8
	Indefinite	4	22.2	100.0
Total		18	100.0	
Missing	System	13		
Total		31		

Here out of the eighteen respondents, 2 or 11.1% are in favor of a two-year term; 4 or 22.2% are in support of a six-year term; 8 or 44.4% recommended an eight-year term; 4 or 22.2% recommended an indefinite term.

It is observed that 13 or 41.9% abstained. Also, when one compares Table 13 with Table 12, there is somewhat of a discrepancy. Fourteen or 45.2% respond in the affirmative to the limit of terms. When those who responded “yes” to term limits are asked to give recommendations, 4 or 22.2% more respond. Out of the 18, 8 or 44.4% favored an eight-year term. It is noted, there still remains much indecisiveness where this is concerned.

Table 14: Pastoring while supervising

Q17-Do you believe the presiding bishop should also pastor a local church while supervising churches in a State or Region?

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	8	25.8	25.8
	No	19	61.3	87.1
	Undecided	4	12.9	100.0
	Total	31	100.0	

Of all thirty-one respondents, 8 or 25.8% say Yes; 19 or 61.3% state No; 4 or 12.9% remain undecided. The data here is quite striking and is definitely an area to be explored and further examined. The majority or 61.3% are opposed to the idea of the presiding bishop pastoring a local church while supervising the region.

Table 15: Ability to pastor while supervising

Q18-Do you think the presiding bishop can effectively supervise the work and pastor a local church at the same time?

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	9	29.0	29.0
	No	21	67.7	96.8
	Undecided	1	3.2	100.0
	Total	31	100.0	

From the thirty-one who responded 9 or 29.0 report Yes; 21 or 67.7% say No; 1 or 3.2% is undecided. Table 15 definitely correlates with Table 14, only this time the “undecided” drop from 4 or 12.9% to 1 or 3.2%.

Respondents seem to agree overwhelmingly that the presiding bishop cannot effectively supervise the work while pastoring a local church. The geographical vastness of some of these regions could certainly be a determining factor here and the heavy administrative demands and expectations placed upon this office.

Table 16: Areas you most need help

Q19A-Areas that you most need help from the presiding bishop: Pastoral care/Mentoring/Confidant

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Pastoral Care/Mentoring/Confidant	18	100.0	100.0
Missing	System	13		
Total		31		

Of the eighteen who responded, 18 or 100% claimed that they needed most help from the presiding bishop in matters relating to pastoral care/mentoring/confidant.

Table 17: Local church management

Q19B-Areas that you most need help from the presiding bishop: Local church management

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Local church management	11	100.0	100.0
Missing	System	20		
Total		31		

Of those who claimed to need help in this area, 11 or 100% responded. Twenty were missing from the system in this area of local church management.

Table 18: Vision casting

Q19C-Areas that you most need help from the presiding bishop: Vision casting

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Vision casting	13	100.0	100.0
Missing	System	18		
Total		31		

To those responding to this, 13 or 100% claimed they most needed help in this area. However, eighteen were missing from the system.

Table 19: Leadership Development

Q19D-Areas that you most need help from the presiding bishop: Leadership development

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Leadership Development	17	100.0	100.0
Missing	System	14		
Total		31		

Seventeen or 100% responded to this item, claiming they need most help in this area. Fourteen were missing from the system.

Table 20: Engaging and Mobilizing the body

Q19E-Areas that you most need help from the presiding bishop: Engaging and mobilizing the body

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Engaging and Mobilizing the Body	17	100.0	100.0
Missing	System	14		
Total		31		

Seventeen or 100% claimed they most needed help in this area. Fourteen were missing from the system.

Table 21: Resources/Evangelism/Discipleship

Q19F-Areas that you most need help from the presiding bishop:
Resources/evangelism/discipleship

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Resources/Evangelism/Discipleship	15	100.0	100.0
Missing	System	16		
Total		31		

To this item 15 or 100% responded. Sixteen are reported missing from the system.

Table 22: Problem-solving and conflict resolution

Q19G-Areas that you most need help from the presiding bishop: Problem-solving and conflict resolution

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Problem-solving and conflict resolution	16	100.0	100.0
Missing	System	15		
Total		31		

To this item 16 or 100% responded. Fifteen were reported missing from the system. The researcher notes that the need for help seems more slanted in the area of spiritual affairs, as opposed to administrative which seems indicated from Table 17 (Q19B).

Open-Ended Questions

In the section where open-ended questions were asked the respondents shared more of their insights and views in a little more detailed way. To the question “*What do you regard as the three most important roles of the presiding bishops? (Q5)* The responses were overwhelmingly slanted in favor of spiritual oversight and pastoral

leadership. Even though they were not requested to list them in terms of which should come first, over 90% of the 28 who responded, identified the spiritual over the administrative. Seventy-five percent of 28 noted administration as one of the three most important roles. Pastoring the pastors and leadership development of ministry in the region also featured strongly.

To the question – *How do you believe the role of the presiding bishop aligns with Scripture?* (Q6) Of the twenty-eight respondents, close to 24 or 85.71% view the role as in line with Scripture. Four or 14.29% did not see it as Scriptural. However, the researcher found the answers of those who responded negatively most interesting. Instead of taking the question from a general standpoint, they seemed to view it as they see it actually operated. For instance, one respondent who responded in the negative declared – “Not very close; it has become too laden down with administrative duties by the International Offices.” Another declared – “I don’t see it being fulfilled according to Scripture.” He further remarked, “the elders in the New Testament had a congregation that they were over and still were presiding elders.” He seemed to hold the view that while they pastored churches, they supervised regions or territories also.

The question, *What do you regard as the most challenging aspects of the various roles of the presiding bishop?* (Q7) - drew quite a variety of different responses, making it somewhat difficult for the researcher to quantify in a simple format. The subject of administration, however, did seem to reoccur.

To the question – *If you could make changes to the various roles of the presiding bishop, what would be your top two changes?* (Q8) – the answers were quite varied but very interesting and informative. More than 50% spoke about making adjustments so that

more attention can be given to the spiritual oversight of the work as opposed to the bulk of administration associated with the office. Only a few, 4 or 14.29% saw absolutely no need for change or could not think of any change.

To the final question in the open-ended questions – *What do you believe the office of the presiding bishop could do for pastors to make them more effective? (Q9)* – Over 90% of respondents addressed the need for more leadership training and development. Approximately 85% expressed a desire for the presiding bishop to encourage ongoing personal development and education, whether formal or informal.

Focus Group

The first two questions submitted were, *How do you see the role of the presiding bishop?* and *If it is considered both administrative and spiritual – should it be more spiritual than administrative, or more administrative than spiritual?* It was the general consensus of the group that the role is dualistic. At first, they generally agreed that it is neither one or the other, but the more they dialogued on the issue and shared their views the consensus developed that the spiritual aspect of the office should dominate. They strongly expressed the view that the bishop should be able to lead spiritually, but also acknowledged that he should have some administrative capabilities.

They were insistent in their views that the presiding bishop should be a visionary, one who could cast a vision for the region. Repeatedly they expressed the thought that he should have a clear vision of where he believes God is wanting to take the State or States he was sent to lead. They expressed vision as two-fold , first where the Lord is leading and secondly where the church needs to go within the society, making regional footprints.

The opinion carried that the presiding bishop is the chief person that helps to ensure that there is a level of consistency maintained and observed by the local churches under his supervision. He serves as unifier and spiritual leader, but somehow, they could not get away from the idea that administration played a vital role to the successful operation of this office. It was however, expressed to the almost unanimous agreement of the group, that successful administration did not necessarily mean that the presiding bishop should actually be the one executing all the administrative matters, as much as overseeing it. According to the young minds discussing this issue, they viewed the presiding bishop as overseeing the administration, which does not mean that he has to actually implement or execute it himself. It means that he is watching, advising, spiritually guiding those people who are doing the administrative part on his behalf. It was their considered opinion that this was what the disciples did. They recognized they were going to be responsible for the ministry of the word and prayer, so they deliberately arranged to discover people that could be trusted to do administration for a much better, smoother operation of the overall work.

To the researcher it was very interesting that the Acts 6 passage, was used to accentuate their convictions about the role being decisively more spiritual than administrative. The incident of Jesus being hosted and entertained in Mary's and Martha's home, was also used to substantiate the spiritual taking precedence over the secular and the administrative. Reference was also made to Moses and the spiritual advice he received from Jethro to more effectively shepherd the flock under his care. The point was also eloquently made that when Jesus stands in the midst of the seven churches in the Apocalypse and he addresses the angels or ministers of the churches, he never

spoke to them about administrative things but spiritual. The leaders and leading ministers of the churches were judged and evaluated principally on the spiritual.

Overwhelmingly, the focus group arrived at the conclusion that the role involves both areas, but with the spiritual definitely having the upper hand. The views of the group were very much in keeping with the findings and results of the overall research.

Presiding Bishop Interviews

Important to this study was also the interviews conducted with the two presiding bishops currently serving in other regions of the Church of God of Prophecy. In fact, one carries the title of administrative bishop. When asked to define the role as he sees it should function, he claimed that it is supervisory but that there is a strong apostolic element to it. He noted that overseers have an apostolic role mainly to help establish churches, help mentor pastors and to develop the work in their region. He spoke about the preaching, teaching, praying aspect of the role.

To the follow-up question, *What about administration? The fact that you are called or refer to yourself as an administrative bishop, do you find that a bit confusing to people – when you mention the word administrative in reference to your title?* The Bishop's response was noteworthy. He agreed that because of this many have been led to see the office and role as more administrative principally, somehow obscuring the spiritual and the apostolic. He also seemed keenly aware of the dilemma of being constantly swallowed up by administrative stuff, even admitting to the fact that this was the scenario he was presently facing. He acknowledged how quickly the administrative aspect seems to preoccupy so much of his time, which can so easily put a great strain on the bishop and the office. He also insisted that there needed to be a clear distinction

between the administrative aspect and the apostolic. The researcher noted with keen interest when he specifically indicated he would actually prefer the term presiding bishop rather than administrative. As he further explained, he felt that somehow the term presiding bishop encompassed that of the apostolic element of preaching, teaching, praying, planting churches and pastoring the pastors.

When a similar question concerning the reality of administration was submitted to the second bishop interviewed, a similar response was evoked. He admitted that he would be remiss if he did not acknowledge how bogged down he could become with administration, citing various examples of property acquisition and maintenance of campground, etc. However, he strongly spoke about the need for balance. He indicated how time-consuming the minutiae of bureaucracy could be in reference to this office which is constantly competing for the bishop's time, often cutting into the time that should be given to the spiritual oversight of the work. (A copy of the questions used in the interview with the bishops can be found on Appendix C).

Conclusion

This exercise has indeed been very informative and challenging. The data gleaned from the pastors was very helpful in throwing light on how this office is perceived and received by a constituency within the church that is so closely aligned with and impacted by the presiding bishop's role and office. The interviews with the two presiding bishops also tremendously helped the researcher gain further insight into the office as they presented their different views and insights. It gave insight to the functioning of this office on a wider scale beyond the Northeast Region.

The interview with the Focus Group was also interesting and breathtaking from the standpoint of hearing and seeing how alert and plugged-in the younger minds and leaders of the organization seem to be. They are perceptively looking, evaluating and analyzing and not as disengaged as some may think. It is hoped that from some of the issues raised and covered by the survey that doors will be opened for future dialogue and study and this office may be structured or restructured to serve more effectively and efficiently.

CHAPTER 5

OUTCOMES AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

This thesis-Project is a study of the challenges of the presiding bishop of the Northeast Region of the Church of God of Prophecy. It supports the fact that though enmeshed in a world of bureaucracy and administrative responsibilities which comes with the office, the presiding bishop is first and foremost a shepherd of the sheep, sent to feed, nourish, nurture and tend to the flock, in spite of secular thinking and expectations to the contrary. It attempts to answer the question, “How does the presiding bishop negotiate all the administrative imperatives, attached to this office and remain true to his biblical calling? Other questions examined are, Is the role basically administrative or is it preeminently spiritual or is it both? If it is both should one aspect predominate over the other? Therefore, is the presiding bishop chiefly an administrator, mainly doing administrative duties or is he above everything else a pastor of the flock?

To complete this thesis-project successfully, several literary sources were examined, and inferences drawn from these sources, along with the outcome of a field survey conducted among the pastors of the region. They help provide the answers to the main questions of this thesis-project. The survey helped indicate how pastors are being affected or impacted by the presiding bishop and what their thoughts are in relation to this office and its functioning.

Some of the questions and answers used in this study are considered in this chapter which also includes some recommendations at the end that will hopefully, if

implemented, help presiding bishops stay the course and remain faithful to their true calling and purpose. It was the stated intention of this project not just to identify and confront some of the challenges facing this office, especially here in the Northeast Region, but also to endeavor to work toward a paradigm for the presiding bishop to be a more effective shepherd of the flock. It is also hoped that this project will somehow spark further scholarly work in this area, perhaps helping to redirect the thinking of the Church of God of Prophecy where this crucial office is concerned.

More Spiritual Than Administrative

The results of the survey and other literature employed by this study support original hypotheses. The results of the data reveal that it is both a spiritual and an administrative role, but the study explicitly asserts that it is more spiritual than administrative. It is both, but it is more one than the other. It is more of a spiritual role and calling than an administrative career and functioning. However, the study strongly implies as supported by the literature, by the focus groups and from the interviews conducted, if not careful it can quickly become out of focus and imbalanced, with the administrative superseding or circumventing the spiritual. If caution is not observed the presiding bishop can quickly become principally an administrator and in some instances this has already become the case to the peril of the bishop and a disservice to the entire house of faith. According to the findings of this study it becomes tragic when the presiding bishop leaves his sacred calling and office to become a seasoned administrator imprisoned or chained behind the episcopal desk. Harry Blamires is most vocal in his denunciation of such a travesty. The researcher stands in solidarity with him when he

declares, “Nothing therefore could stand in more powerful contrast to the true Christian concept of the bishop than the current concept of the administrator.”¹

Therefore, the presiding bishop must become intentional about getting out from behind the episcopal desk, fully cognizant of the fact that he was called to be more than a peddler of paper or an administrative office manager, ensuring that reports are received, and buildings are maintained. It is noteworthy that Pope Francis warns his young seminarians about hiding behind a desk or in an office.² He strongly urged them to get out among the people and not to be out of touch, to be frequently among the people, to live among the smell of the sheep, to get their boots dirty and to wash the feet of others. It was his philosophy that one gets real by, “plunging into the world and getting one’s feet dirty.”³ It is based on the Scriptural foundation that the bishop is in the world, though not of the world. The bishop must plunge into the world but also frequently withdraw himself into a solitary place in order to reflect, pray and recollect.

The Bishop like the Christ he represents must be frequently seen among the people, getting to know them, their problems and their needs. The idea of an office bishop is very alien to the teachings and admonition of Scripture. Much of the data evidence this truth. It is very much one of Pope Francis’ themes as he attempts to change the prevailing culture within his church. He frequently calls for a church with the Christ-like ability, “of walking at the people’s side, a church of doing more than simply listening to them; a church which accompanies them on their journey.”⁴ As an attempt is made to

1. Harry Blamires, *The Christian Mind: How Should a Christian Think?* (Vancouver, BC: Regent College Publishing, 2005), 58.

2. Chris Lowney, *Pope Francis: Why He Leads the Way He Leads* (Chicago, IL: Loyola Press, 2013), 69.

3. Blamires, *The Christian Mind*, 69.

4. Blamires, *The Christian Mind*, 63.

look at this office in the Church of God of Prophecy and even to change the prevailing culture where the office of the presiding bishop is concerned, similar appeals will also need to be repeated and exemplified in the lives and actions of the presiding bishop.

There is an urgent need to step out from behind the episcopal desks and offices, going beyond reports and figures, in order to do ministry among the people, to minister to the poor, the disadvantaged, the marginalized and to become so inserted in the midst of the flock that they indeed live with the smell of the sheep, as presented in Scripture and illustrated by the literature drawn from for this study.

It is a learned fact that sitting behind the desk the bishop runs the risk of becoming out of touch and disconnected from his people. This fact is borne out by one of the bishops interviewed for this project, who reported that he makes a deliberate effort constantly to move from behind the desk and to be among people even for the purposes of receiving inspiration and maintaining freshness. He sees the constant need for service and ministry beyond the four walls of the office. It is so much more than administration, and even though he refers to himself and is called an administrative bishop, in defining and describing his role and office, he spoke very little initially about administration. His main reference and definition had to do with the apostolic element. He spoke more about the preaching, teaching, praying aspect of the role. His desire to plant and establish churches, to see the work grow, to help inspire the pastors to grow spiritually, and to inspire his region to go to the next level spiritually – were his main emphasis.

In all the study and work done in connection with this project, nowhere did anyone call for the presiding bishop to be more of an administrator. Overwhelmingly, there was a call for more pastoral leadership, as especially advocated and presented in the

Acts 6 model – the desire of giving oneself to more prayer and ministry of the Word. Both bishops were in strong agreement of having this model actualized and exemplified in their lives. Excessive demands of administration though endemic to the office was seen as almost antithetical to what they perceived as their primary task, that of preaching, teaching, casting vision and taking the spiritual oversight of the churches under their care. One bishop spoke of the constant need of self-evaluation, to ensure that he was not becoming lopsided and too heavily weighted down and overwrought with administrative matters and concerns.

The study reveals the pattern the presiding bishop follows is the one exemplified by the Supreme Shepherd who plainly defined his role by stating, “Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many (Matthew 20:28). The bishop expends his life in sacrificial service to others. It is not a calling to superiority, elevation or dominance over others. It is a life of heartfelt, genuine service in the cause of Christ and in service to humanity. The presiding bishop serves. Whatever real power or authority he has, is expressed in terms of *diakonia* or service. He keeps in mind Pope Francis’ words, “authentic power is service.”⁵ The researcher agrees with the statement he further makes, “The world is not here to serve me; I am here to serve the world.”⁶ He belongs to a priesthood of service as Pope John Paul II reveals.”⁷ The presiding bishop wears a towel. He is not afraid or ashamed to get his feet dirty. He is first and foremost a pastor of the flock. He is a father-figure. He is a Father-in-God.⁸

5. Lowney, *Pope Francis*, 43.

6. Lowney, *Pope Francis*, 39.

7. John Paul, *John Paul II / Rise, Let Us Be on Our Way*, trans. Walter Ziemba (New York: Warner Books, 2004), 49.

8. Blamires, *The Christian Mind*, 58

He disavows the ‘me first’ culture refusing to be self-absorbed, honor-obsessed or money-obsessed. All he does is for the greater glory of God. The data underscores the fact that his role is more spiritual than administrative.

Administrative Not to be Overlooked

Though primarily spiritual the presiding bishop cannot be so naïve as to ignore and disregard the administrative necessities and demands of the office. The data is not oblivious to the fact that administration is also an integral part of this role and office and if not diligently attended to, can create grave havoc to the occupant of the episcopal chair and the churches under his care. Though time-consuming and tedious, neglect of administrative functions can create much spiritual pain and lead to unwarranted stress and burden on the ministry and all involved. Much discussion was engendered in the focus group in reference to this salient point. Even after admitting to the primacy of the pastoral component to this role, it was cautioned that administration is also critically important. It was the consensus that the bishop should be able to take the lead spiritually, but it was also especially voiced that the presiding bishop should possess some administrative capabilities.

It was expressly stated, if he cannot administer the resources God has placed at his disposal, what good is it going to do. It was the strong feeling of the focus group that it was the spiritual that grounds everything, and that out of the spiritual, the administrative flows or is properly executed. What was interesting however was the explanation given about how the administrative is executed. The point was made that ensuring that administration was done, did not necessarily mean the bishop himself

should be responsible for doing it all, as much as ensuring that it gets done by knowledgeable, capable people. The observation was expressed that the spiritually-focused presiding bishop should find a way, like the first apostolic bishops did in Acts 6. He should make sure that administrative matters are not disregarded but confronted and properly discharged. The data overwhelmingly supports this view.

It reveals the fact that administration is a vital part of the complexity of the role, but it underscores the point that the presiding bishop does not necessarily have to be solely responsible for getting it done. He can wisely expand leadership and conscript others to assist as deemed necessary, a thought that shall be revisited later on in this chapter. The data underlines the fact that the bishop should have people around him who can do things administratively.

The study also reveals the fact that some kind of orientation needs to be given to presiding bishops around the administrative aspect of the work. It is a known fact that before being called to serve in the capacity of presiding bishop in the Church of God of Prophecy, very little orientation or training is given, if any. There remains a real need for this situation to be addressed by the leadership of the International church. It should be made mandatory that some sort of comprehensive orientation be given to help presiding bishops in this new demanding and sometimes overwhelming work. It may seem easy to some, but it is must be acknowledged that even to pastor one local church could be quite challenging, how much more having the oversight of 30 or 40 or 60 or 100 churches.

Undoubtedly, the Master Shepherd saw the need for intense training before leaving the first apostolic bishops in charge of the general oversight of the church. The demanding nature of this office certainly calls for more training and education than that

which is presently offered. Training on every level, formal and informal, remains an urgent necessity and priority in the Church of God of Prophecy. Every effort presently put forward in this connection ought to be commended and supported even more, especially by the leadership level of the church. The consortium arrangements entered into with fully accredited Lee University, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and the Pentecostal Theological seminary offer indispensable help and invaluable opportunities to the leaders and members of the Church of God of Prophecy in this regard. May many more be encouraged to apply themselves and take advantage of these golden opportunities offered.

Vastness of Terrain

An area of grave concern that must be noted and addressed as a result of this study is the geographical vastness of the region. In fact, in the Church of God of Prophecy there are some regions that are comprised of as many as eight or nine states. The Northeast region is one of them. In the Northeast, the region is made up of seven states and one island, the island of Bermuda, which is a British overseas territory, situated in the North Atlantic ocean. Initially economic restraints and financial considerations seemed to be the deciding factors in these strategic moves, resulting in some of the regions being expanded. However, from a practical standpoint, questions are now being raised as to how effective and feasible it is to properly supervise and adequately evangelize such vast territories.

Territories have been expanded, states have been merged, overhead has been reduced, but financial resources have remained quite limited and in some cases, have

even been reduced as explained somewhat in chapter one. The drastic financial changes made in the overall financial system of the International church around 1996 continue to have a most stringently adverse effect on the offices of the states, regions and nations with no real glimmer of hope or change in sight.

It must be acknowledged that the ability to plant and establish new churches and to actively engage in new field evangelism have been severely compromised and almost brought to a minimum in many cases, as monies to operate these offices seem not as fluid and as constant as before. Therefore, questions continue to be raised concerning the effectiveness of the “regionalization” of some states and territories – Can the presiding bishop really, effectively serve as a catalyst for growth and change in these expanded areas? Can regions be properly supervised, when they have become so large and beyond the scope of proper, competent supervision with such limited financial resources and personnel? Is it not that some territories or states are being neglected as a result of present structure? Is this not being reflected by present report of statistics?

The extent to which “regionalization” has helped the overall operations of the Church of God of Prophecy has yet to be fully determined and yet to be quantified. Has expanded territories helped in the overall growth and progress of the organization or is it just an expedient tool, a temporary stop-gap to help address current problems while creating others? This still being seriously considered and debated in some quarters.

From the vantage point of the researcher, it may have helped in reducing some overhead expenses but overall much concern remains over what kind of supervision some of the smaller, unevangelized states are really receiving. What is known for sure is that to effectively supervise seven states and an island overseas is quite an undertaking and an

issue that the Church of God of Prophecy should revisit, even in the light of dwindling resources. The rather troubling statistics as presented in chapter one of this thesis-project remains cause for motivation and concern. Certainly drastic measures must be taken to help reverse some of these alarming realities presently facing the Church of God of Prophecy and the Northeast region and elsewhere.

Strengthening, empowering and relying more intently upon the role and office of the District Overseers and some of our more self-sufficient churches and pastors may be a way forward. This may certainly be one of the ways to help relieve the burden of the regional presiding bishop's office. The harvest partnering idea of encouraging some of our larger churches to partner with some smaller churches in need of help and in helping to plant and mother new churches may also be a winning strategy. Somehow, the vision must be shared for local churches that have done relatively well to remain evangelistic and to carry real passionate concern for smaller churches and new field evangelism. The need for a shared vision and that of sharing the load evangelistically may really be a way to proceed in light of the vastness of the regional terrain. The need for apostolic delegation and strategic planning remains urgent.

Pastoring While Supervising

To this very pertinent question the vast majority of respondents decisively said 'no' to the presiding bishop pastoring a church while supervising an entire region. The question asked was, "Do you believe the presiding bishop should also pastor a local church while supervising churches in a state or region?" A large percentage 61.3% responded 'no,' with 8 or 25.8% responding in the affirmative. To the follow-up

question, “Do you believe that he can effectively supervise the work and pastor a local church at the same time?” The negative response was 67.7%, with 29.0% saying yes. Overwhelmingly, they responded he should not and he could not do it effectively.

The researcher is of the opinion that this could be the outcome based on the sheer vastness of the region, coupled with the intensity of administrative responsibilities and demands associated with this office and how they conceptualize this office as functioning. Either the local church will thrive, and the region suffer, or they will both suffer from improper care, attention and supervision. From the researcher’s point of view, it can only be accomplished with a great pastoral team in place or perhaps an excellent ministerial oversight team to assist with the supervision of the region. Without proper team assistance locally and regionally it cannot be done to the satisfaction of all involved. Some will cry out like in the Acts 6 passage about being severely neglected or overlooked, thus adding greater strain to the office.

The researcher used to agree that this could be done effectively but has since discovered for himself how difficult it is to do both satisfactorily. It has been the researcher’s experience that the presiding bishop can easily travel as much as 1,000 miles by car in one week. To do both requires much strategic planning and wise apostolic delegation and oversight.

Tenured Leadership

The study reveals the strong ambivalence of the pastoral leadership concerning this subject in the Northeast region. Unlike the Church of God, which has the same roots as the Church of God of Prophecy, there really has been no strict observance of tenured

leadership or term limits applied to the appointment of presiding bishops in the Church of God of Prophecy.

Tenured leadership is still not a very well accepted idea in the Church of God of Prophecy. There still seems to be much resistance to this idea from some quarters. Only 14 or 45.2% out of all the respondents said yes to this concept. Nine or 29.0% said 'no' and 8 or 25.8% were unsure. The researcher queries if there was clarity of understanding where this particular question was concerned, seeing that it is somewhat of a foreign term to the organization or if there was some temerity involved in regard to who was conducting the survey, even though anonymity and confidentiality were assured. For those who responded yes, they generally agreed that a term limit of eight years was sufficient. It could also be that because there are no real set limits where pastors are concerned, the same sentiment was extended to the bishop's office. Another point worth considering is that A. J. Tomlinson, the founder of the organization, seemed to serve so well in the Church of God of Prophecy and for so long, that the fear of one man serving indefinitely, has been diminished as long as they felt that proper checks and balances were in place.

The writer believes that tenured leadership may definitely be a good idea in terms of introducing new vision and injecting new inspiration and freshness into the work, whether every four, six or eight years. It may also be a good way of helping the presiding bishop keep in touch with reality, reminding him that after all, he is really a true servant, temporarily permitted to serve and function at this level of responsibility and service. It disallows the building of dynasties and discourages officialdom or careerism. It can also help the presiding bishop from not being made to feel unmovable or untouchable, thereby

discouraging the tendency to become autocratic. The writer also feels that it is a good thing to be allowed to return to pastoral work, bringing one in closer proximity to the people and their needs, which is the true essence of one's calling. Term limits for general appointees and those who hold appointive power over others, may be very good idea going forward. A change of pace and being in a place of less stress may be of great benefit to all. This certainly is another area that should be revisited where this office is concerned.

Limitations of the Study

The researcher is keenly aware of the fact that this study has limitations and he acknowledges them with respect. For instance, it was desired that more of the pastors would have responded, to give a more accurate picture of the feelings and thoughts of the ministry towards this office on a wider scale. This certainly was one of the limitations. In the future it would be advisable to send out the research questionnaire earlier and then to spend more time in even calling the pastors one by one to humbly encourage them to respond, again reassuring them of anonymity and confidentiality.

It is also the desire of the researcher that should a further study of this role and office be executed, that the target audience be definitely expanded to include more of the laity, seeing that the presiding bishop in a very real way pastors the entire region. It is evident that the views of the laity, may differ drastically from the views of the pastors and it would be helpful to also sample their views. However, due to time and other constraints pursuing such a venture was not feasible.

The researcher is also of the conviction that interviewing a bishop from the Catholic church or some other faith tradition for purposes of comparing and contrasting the operations of this office from another entirely different religious perspective, could have shown more light and added another dimension to the study of this role and office. However, it is interesting to indicate that the literature did look at the lives and writings of two prominent presiding bishops of the catholic church, that of Pope Francis, the present Pope and that of the late John Paul II, from which relevant information was gleaned. The data clearly shows that their experiences also involved the subtle dance between the spiritual and the administrative and how they skillfully maneuvered to keep it in balance. Even with the limitations of this study much pertinent information was ascertained.

In moving forward, it cannot be repudiated that some changes need to be made in the Church of God of Prophecy in reference to the role and office of the presiding bishop. However, to do so will call for deliberate and intentional action. There is need for more study, more research, more education, more teaching concerning this office in order to streamline it and bring it more in keeping with its original intent and function. The church must continue to work toward a paradigm to help the presiding bishop to be a more effective shepherd of the flock. It is a monumental task indeed, but one worth pursuing because so much of the future of the organization depends on it. Some recommendations presented in the next few lines may help.

Bishop's Spiritual Formation

In moving forward the data reveals that the bishop should have a profound theological formation that is constantly updated and sharpened. In fact, even before one is chosen to become a presiding bishop he should have already been working on himself.

Harry Blamires is on target when he promotes the notion that, “A fit and proper beginning would be to nominate to bishoprics only men of known spiritual and pastoral gifts who will refuse to be turned into administrators.”⁹ Blamires is so thoroughly convinced that the role is spiritual that to even see the bishop as an administrator is almost “anathema” to him and thoroughly secular. He believes to do so is doing grave practical damage to the church.”¹⁰ In Chris Lowney’s book he correctly points out, “All leadership starts as self-leadership.”¹¹ He painstakingly insists, “You can’t lead the rest of us if you can’t lead yourself.”¹²

The presiding bishop must take time to know his God, his beliefs, his philosophy of ministry and his philosophy of missions. It is important to observe and remember that just before Pope Francis became a priest, he wrote out a short credo to himself in what he reported was done in a moment of great spiritual intensity. He kept it throughout his entire ministry to remind him always of his core convictions. It is the strong belief of the researcher of this study that the bishop’s life and lifestyle should be governed and instructed by certain core beliefs, not just inscribed on paper, but written and inscribed on his heart.

9. Blamires, *The Christian Mind*, 59.

10. Blamires, *The Christian Mind*, 57.

11. Lowney, *Pope Francis*, 28.

12. Lowney, *Pope Francis*, 28.

Should the presiding bishop be clear about his role and have a proper understanding of his office, even before he steps into it, will definitely help to keep him grounded and focused. The researcher wholeheartedly agrees with Lowney when he advocates, “That the most important leadership formation is the personal, too often-neglected inner work of forging the convictions today that will guide our behavior tomorrow, like making the commitment to serve.”¹³ It is absolutely imperative that the bishop take time and effort to be theologically informed and formed. There can be no short cuts. In order to serve and function effectively the researcher strongly believes that the presiding bishop must take the time and effort to first know himself and what he is uniquely called by providence to do. He must know that he has come to the kingdom for such a time as this (Esther 4:14). He should be able to differentiate between *ekklesia*’s will and that of the divine Shepherd. The presiding bishop understands the premise that leaders act on beliefs and convictions formed long before they arrive at present position.¹⁴ He must know what drives his commitments.

It is most noteworthy that it took, Pope Francis, 12 years from the time he began training to eventually become a priest as a Jesuit – 12 years in training. In the Church of God of Prophecy, in a relatively short space of time one can move through the ranks from lay minister to become a bishop, the highest rank of ministry in the Church of God of Prophecy. Not much training or leadership formation is demanded or required. Certainly this remains a cause for concern and correction in the Church of God of Prophecy. The bishop’s spiritual formation should be strongly required to serve at this high level of ministry in the church. There should be more intense examination and vetting of

13. Lowney, *Pope Francis*, 48.

14. Lowney, *Pope Francis*, 67.

candidates. More should be stipulated and put in place apart from the Foundations Course and meeting the requirements of 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1.

Gordon Fee in his commentary of 1 Timothy 3:10, which refers to the fact that deacons should first be tested before they serve, makes a very interesting statement. He states, “Although one cannot be sure, this may be assumed to be true of the overseers as well.”¹⁵ He claims that some believe that a formal examination of some kind is in view, including a probation period. However, he also acknowledges that this seems to be a development that took place later in church history. He professes though what Paul is really saying is that when Timothy finds men, “who keep hold of the revealed truth of the faith with a clear conscience, then let such “approved” men serve (the verb form of *diakonos*).”¹⁶ Even then there was a need for some sort of testing or examination to be put in place, before serving in these key positions of leading in the church.

Pope John Paul II is on point when he inferred that his experience has taught him that there is great need the bishop has for recollection and study. He declares, “He has to have a profound theological formation constantly updated, and a wide-ranging interest in thought and culture.”¹⁷ The same is true for the Church of God of Prophecy. There is great need for more training and spiritual formation where the Church of God of Prophecy bishops are concerned, formal and informal training, through more leadership training and programs that are more intense academically. The results of the study confirm this. Spiritual formation is a much needed piece going forward.

15. Gordon D. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1989), 87.

16. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 88.

17. Paul, *Rise, Let Us Be on Our Way*, 93.

Mentorship Program for Bishops

The bishop must first be proficiently mentored in order to effectively mentor others. This principle is first set in motion by the Chief Shepherd. Before He commissioned the first apostolic bishops to make disciples and shepherd the flock, he first systematically taught and discipled them for three and one half years. Inarguably they were exposed to the highest level of training and mentoring in soul care and in the cure of souls before they were given the commission to go and make disciples.

The special affinity that the apostle Paul had with the young, emerging, junior ministers like Timothy, Titus and Epaphroditus (Philippians 2), is incontestable. He directly charges them, especially Timothy and Titus to pass it on to others – “to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others” (2 Timothy 2:2). Timothy is commissioned to pass on the Christian faith and tradition to trustworthy men – men worthy of trust, men like himself and his mentor the Apostle Paul, who in turn can teach and pour into others. The researcher of this project believes the same is required of the Christian faith today. There is an urgent need for the practical implementation of such a program in the Church of God of Prophecy.

Unfortunately, there are not many guidelines or instructions given in terms of how bishops are selected and how worthy candidates are prepared, before ordaining them to this high office or ministry. Surely there needs to be some sort of explicit criteria put in place, some sort of official training instituted to further enlighten the organization and those desirous in fulfilling this calling, concerning the ministry of the bishop in terms of duties and what is required of the role and its functions.

The need for this, was highlighted and reaffirmed by the research questionnaire used in this project, especially in response to question 4, where so many agreed to the fact that they viewed the role of the bishop as not clearly defined. If in the eyes of the ministry there remains so much uncertainty and not much clarity concerning this role, one can only imagine how unclear the role remains in the eyes of the laity. In fact, as highlighted in chapter one of this thesis-project, in some cases, new presiding bishops are sent out to territories or regions with not so much as an orientation to existing circumstances and conditions. He somehow has to figure things out for himself and work his way through truckloads of administrative complexities. He sometimes inherits an administrative quagmire. If not aware of his true role and calling he can easily become sidetracked and find himself overburdened, quickly over-loaded, burnt out and running on empty.

The researcher strongly recommends the mentorship program principle as exemplified in Scriptures, Old and New, to be intentionally reengaged. Elisha needed Elijah. Joshua apparently was mentored by Moses and Samuel by Eli. Jesus mentored the first apostolic bishops and Paul was an excellent mentor to emerging leaders of his day. Serving alongside an experienced successful presiding bishop could really be a source of great inspiration and encouragement to an “incoming” newly appointed presiding bishop. It could be that when he is chosen as ‘bishop-elect’ or when he is newly appointed, he could be assigned to be assisted and mentored by a more experienced presiding bishop. He could be teamed up with a veteran bishop to initially help him navigate and work through his new assignment and territory. Having someone even from a nearby region or one who previously served in the position, come alongside a newly appointed presiding

bishop may be of great benefit and assistance. To know that they are not alone but serving right alongside them is a spiritual director and a seasoned accountability partner – may be a blessing of indescribable magnitude to new presiding bishops.

Apostolic Delegation

It is remarkable how intransigent these first bishops of the Early Church were, in terms of refusing to allow their mission of caring for the spiritual needs and oversight of the house, to be interrupted or nullified in anyway. When circumstances threatened their mission-focus, they forcefully pushed back in no uncertain terms, clarifying, redefining and restating their mission again to themselves and all who would listen. They affirmed emphatically, “And we will give attention to prayer and the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:4). It was their conviction that there were others better qualified and more capable than they were of tending to the temporal pressing needs of the house. Their obligation remained the spiritual oversight and operations of the house – attention to prayer and the ministry of the Word without which everything else becomes off-balanced and disfigured. They plain refused to be turned around. They were intractable.

The writer asserts if the bishop of the Northeast region is unclear concerning his role and expectations, it is reasonable to expect that others may also have a protracted and crisscrossed view of the bishop’s role. Confusion seems to creep in and pervade, and focus becomes centered on internal problems of the house if the bishop is not able to help the believers focus correctly on their true mission, which is that of winning new souls and ever expanding the house, as he keeps true to his goal and mission. Lowney in his book on Pope Francis captures the essence of this, when he infers:

But Pope Francis can't allow internal management issues to become a sinkhole that sucks in the preponderance of his time and energy. Credit him with perceiving this: he seems intent on maintaining his relentless outward focus on mission. A leader can find and direct a talented lieutenant to fix the internal plumbing, but a leader cannot delegate the task of leading the outward focus on mission.¹⁸

That's what the Early church did. They inspirationally led and were directed by apostolic leadership. The Northeast regional church should heed the call as a twenty-first century church to find talented lieutenants to fix the internal plumbing and carry on with its God given mandate of prayerfully pastoring the house as led of the Spirit. The data reveals there are those who think it may be a good idea to appoint an administrative bishop as well as an apostolic bishop to ensure that both aspects of the office are satisfied. Like Blamires, they see the wisdom of decoupling the roles for greater effect, that more may be effectively accomplished.

In the light of stark reality, the writer proposes the presiding bishop of the Northeast Church of God of Prophecy must genuinely seek to map a new way forward. It is evident that many are now seeing and sensing the need for change. Administration is undeniable, but it is also to be realized that if it is first a spiritual house then it must be pastored and led by a new breed of presiding bishops and leaders just as determined as the original twelve, not to be detoured from the apostolic order sanctioned.

It seemed so natural for the Early Church leaders to have succumbed to the allurement of table ministry but the wisdom of the Spirit prevailed. Any diversion away from giving full attention to the pastoring of the house was seen as beyond unreasonable (Acts 6:2). Their decision helped maintain the spiritual dynamics to create and effect radical change. They uncompromisingly actualized and embodied the change they spoke

18. Lowney, *Pope Francis*, 129.

about. Mahatma Gandhi is attributed to have declared, “Be the change you want to see in the world.”¹⁹ Consequently, the presiding bishop of the Northeast region must go beyond speaking about change and begin to be the change he desires to see happening. The culture can only begin changing by radically resetting direction and expectations – moving from behind the desk and the office, to effectively pastoring again the clergy and the laity that come under his jurisdictional care.

It is the responsibility of the presiding bishop to discover and develop the gifts that the Chief Shepherd has deposited within the body of Christ to ensure the administrative functions and demands are carried out and executed. It is up to apostolic leadership to recognize the talents placed in the house and wisely commission and use them to great advantage, but under no circumstances should the spiritual be surrendered to subsidiary needs. Apostolic delegation is urgently needed today as in the first century of the church’s operations. Like the first century apostolic bishops, the twenty first century bishops must find a way to get the administrative done by utilizing the gifts and helps that the Spirit has so graciously given to the house.

Called to Pray

It cannot be overemphasized, the discipline of prayer to the successful operation of any venture in regard to the spiritual and administrative operations of the work of the church in the Northeast Region. Scriptures overpoweringly repeatedly highlight this truth. The literature strongly substantiates this crucial point. It is critical to the reversal of every erroneous condition that plagues and affects the region. It is imperative that the presiding

19. Lowney, *Pope Francis*, 130.

bishop find time to pray according to the injunction of Acts 6:4. J. Oswald Sanders vividly underscores this when he distinctly declares, “The spiritual leader should outpace the rest of the church above all, in prayer.”²⁰ Evidently, the presiding bishop can delegate and outsource a lot of things, but this is one responsibility that he cannot assign to another to do for him. As pastor of the flock he is called upon to set the pace in prayer. He cannot fall prey to such a busy schedule that easily dismisses prayer.

Finding time to pray in the midst of a most hectic and demanding schedule is a consistent challenge of this office. A quote made by Chris Lowney in reference to this predicament is quite enlightening here, especially in reference to the almost maddening pace of the administrative life and ministry of the bishop. He quotes French Bishop Francis de Sales: “When asked how much daily prayer was necessary, he is reported to have counseled that half an hour is sufficient, except when one is too busy. In that case, pray twice as long, an hour.”²¹ Martin Luther addresses the same issue with candor. It is claimed he said, “Work, work from early till late, I have so much to do that I shall spend the first three hours in prayer.”²² It is a point made clarion clear, that no presiding bishop should proceed without prioritizing prayer.

There can be no moving forward successfully without consistent, prevailing, intercessory, effectual praying. Apostolic power stems from seasoned apostolic prayer. They confessed, “But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the word” (Acts. 6:4). Failure to execute this mandate is to ensure the failure of every

20. J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership*, rev. ed. (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1989, 1980), 83.

21. Lowney, *Pope Francis*, 82.

22. Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership*, 84.

endeavor embarked upon in the Northeast no matter how well intentioned. Called to pastor the flock, he must give careful attention to the ministry of prayer and the Word.

Conclusion

If this is our highest rank of ministry in the Church of God of Prophecy, then certainly more should be done to help candidates fully comprehend and serve with distinction in this high – priestly office of Christ’s service. It is irrefutable that the bishop is called upon to walk in the footsteps of the Chief Bishop. Like the consummate Shepherd he serves, giving his life in sacrificial service always for the sheep. He imitates the Christ, the Divine Shepherd in the care and cure of souls. He is not just a representative of the church or mere official of the church. He is shepherd of the sheep and pastor of the flock. He constantly refuses to become an administrator. He is indeed a Father-in-God, committed and commissioned with the sacred ministry of oversight to all the sheep found in his care. The presiding bishop should give attention to spiritual formation. He should be mentored. He needs to exercise apostolic delegation. It is a life given over to prayer and ministry of the Word.

It is hoped that this study is only the beginning and one among many in researching such a vital topic in reference to the office of the presiding bishop in the Church of God of Prophecy. The study shows that the problem seems quite endemic to the operations of this office in the United States, however, having critically analyzed the data the researcher speculates the findings will align themselves in a global context. It would be most interesting to have this study replicated in the European and African context of the Church of God of Prophecy and also in other strategic places where the

Church of God of Prophecy presently functions. Though faced with a multiplicity of administrative challenges, the bishop's role and function go way beyond that of administrator – he is first and foremost, pastor to the flock.

APPENDIX A

COVER LETTER

October 10, 2018

Dear Pastor,

In a critical review of church history, it would appear that the role and office of the presiding bishop, have become more complex and involved over the years. As one who presently serves in that capacity for the Church of God of Prophecy Northeast Region, I am presently doing a study to help clarify and identify what the true role and function of the presiding bishop should be.

This questionnaire is designed to gather information about your perception and understanding of this role. This is a confidential and anonymous survey and at no time will you be asked to identify yourself. Please do not place your name on any of the materials. The information that you provide will be presented only in summary form, in combination with responses from other participants.

I realize that your time is valuable, so I have deliberately designed this questionnaire so that it should take you no longer than 15 minutes to complete.

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this important project. By completing this anonymous questionnaire, you have given your consent that you are a voluntary participant in this study.

This study is being conducted as partial fulfillment of my Doctor of Ministry thesis at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in Hamilton, Massachusetts. If you have any questions, I can be reached at 518-489-0753 or via email at leroygreenaway@verizon.net.

I would like the questionnaire to be returned no later than Monday, November 12th, 2018.

Sincerely,

Leroy V. Greenaway
Presiding Bishop Northeast Region

APPENDIX B
RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

CIRCLE THE RESPONSE THAT BEST REPRESENTS YOUR OPINION

1. The role of the presiding bishop is best understood as being exclusively administrative

Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly agree

2. The role of the presiding bishop is best understood as being primarily pastoral and shepherding.

Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly agree

3. I personally view the role of the presiding bishop as more spiritual than administrative.

Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly agree

4. I personally view the role of the presiding bishop is not clearly defined.

Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly agree

5. What do you regard as the three most important roles of the presiding bishop?

A) _____

B) _____

C) _____

6. How do you believe the role of the presiding bishop aligns with Scripture?

7. What do you regard as the most challenging aspects of the various roles of the presiding bishop?

8. If you could make changes to the various roles of the presiding bishop, what would be your top two changes?

9. What do you believe the office of the presiding bishop could do for pastors to make them more effective?

CIRCLE THE RESPONSE THAT BEST REPRESENTS YOUR OPINION

10. How satisfied are you with the quality of support and service you have received from the presiding bishop in your area?

VERY DISSATISFIED DISSATISFIED NEUTRAL SATISFIED VERY SATISFIED

11. How satisfied are you with the presiding bishop shepherding and encouraging overseers, pastors and other ministers under their care?

VERY DISSATISFIED DISSATISFIED NEUTRAL SATISFIED VERY SATISFIED

12. How satisfied are you with the presiding bishop's problem-solving skills?

VERY DISSATISFIED DISSATISFIED NEUTRAL SATISFIED VERY SATISFIED

13. How satisfied are you with the presiding bishop's ability to discover and develop leaders?

VERY DISSATISFIED DISSATISFIED NEUTRAL SATISFIED VERY SATISFIED

14. How satisfied are you in his promoting, encouraging and modeling the principles of church-planting and new-field evangelism?

VERY DISSATISFIED DISSATISFIED NEUTRAL SATISFIED VERY SATISFIED

15. Do you believe we should have some form of term limits for the office of presiding bishop?

Yes No

16. If you responded "Yes," to term limits, what do you recommend?

2 years 4 years 6 years 8 years Indefinite

17. Do you believe the presiding bishop should also pastor a local church while supervising churches in a State or Region?

Yes No Undecided

18. Do you think the presiding bishop can effectively supervise the work and pastor a local church at the same time?

Yes No Undecided

19. Please indicate the following areas that you most need help from the office of the presiding bishop:

{ *✓ all that applies* }

- Pastoral Care/Mentoring/Confidant
- Local Church Management
- Vision Casting
- Leadership Development
- Engaging and Mobilizing the Body
- Resources/Evangelism/Discipleship
- Problem-solving and Conflict Resolution

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW WITH PRESIDING BISHOP'S QUESTIONS

1. What role do you see prayer playing in your leadership responsibilities as Administrative Bishop?
2. What role does preaching play?
3. How would you describe role?
4. How do you think people perceive this office?
5. Do you see yourself as pastor of the whole state or region?
6. Do you view yourself as pastor to the pastors?
7. In what way do you function in that role?
8. Do you find there is much time for prayer?
9. Do you find there is much time for study of the Word?
10. Is this in your mind a spiritual role?
11. Why do you refer to yourself as an administrative Bishop?
12. Where does that term come from?
13. Do you see the apostles as administrative bishops?
14. How does that square with Acts 6, John 21: 15-13; 1 Peter 5?
15. Do you see yourself as Shepherd of the sheep or pastor to the flock?
16. Define your role?
17. What would make your role easier to fulfil?
18. Gregory the Great spoke of the secularization of this role - Do you agree?
19. In your work do you find the administrative outweigh the spiritual or vice versa?
20. Which do you prefer?

APPENDIX D

FOCUS GROUP – QUESTIONS

1. How do you see the role of the Presiding Bishop?
2. Is it just an Administrative role?
3. Do you see it as a spiritual role?
4. Is it both?
5. Do you see it as more administrative than spiritual?
6. Do you see it as more spiritual than administrative?
7. What are your expectations of this Office?
8. Do you think it functions as it should?
9. What are your perceptions?
10. What adjustments if any should be made?

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